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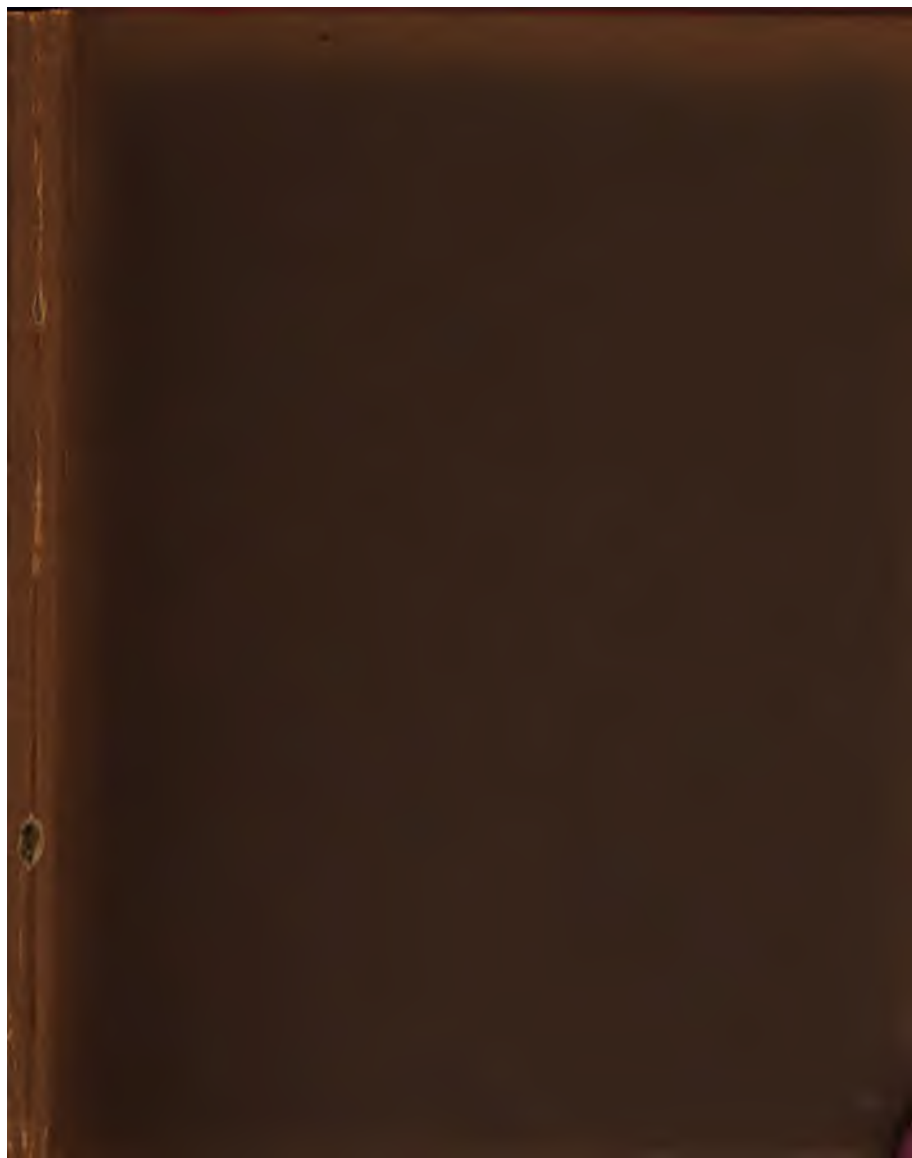
The Lost Sunbeam

Rev. P. B. Potter, M. A.

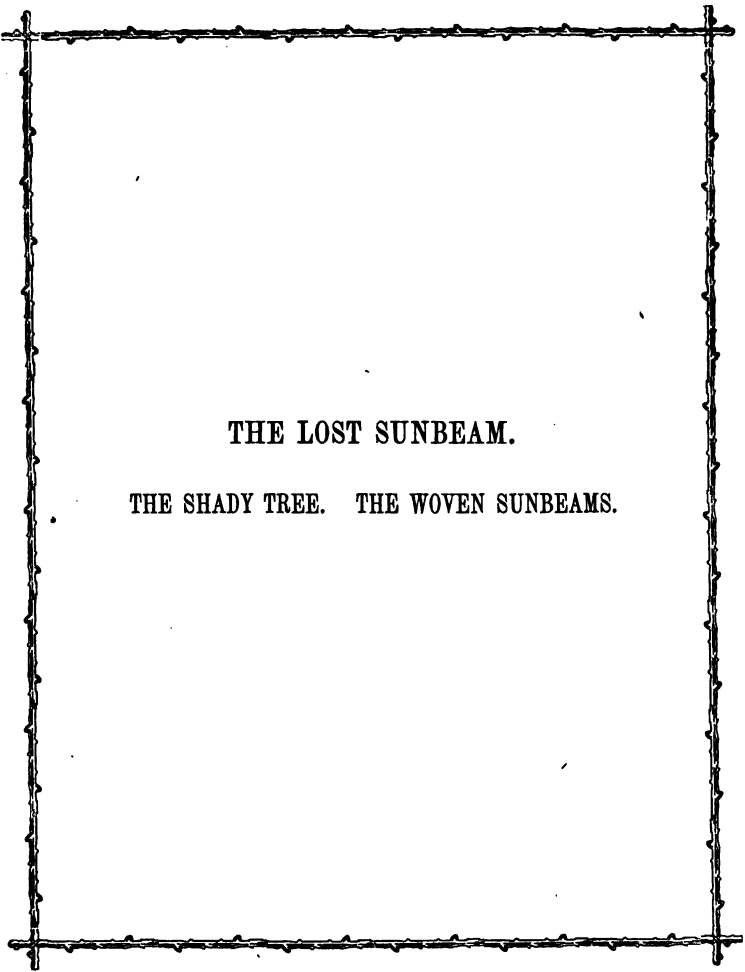


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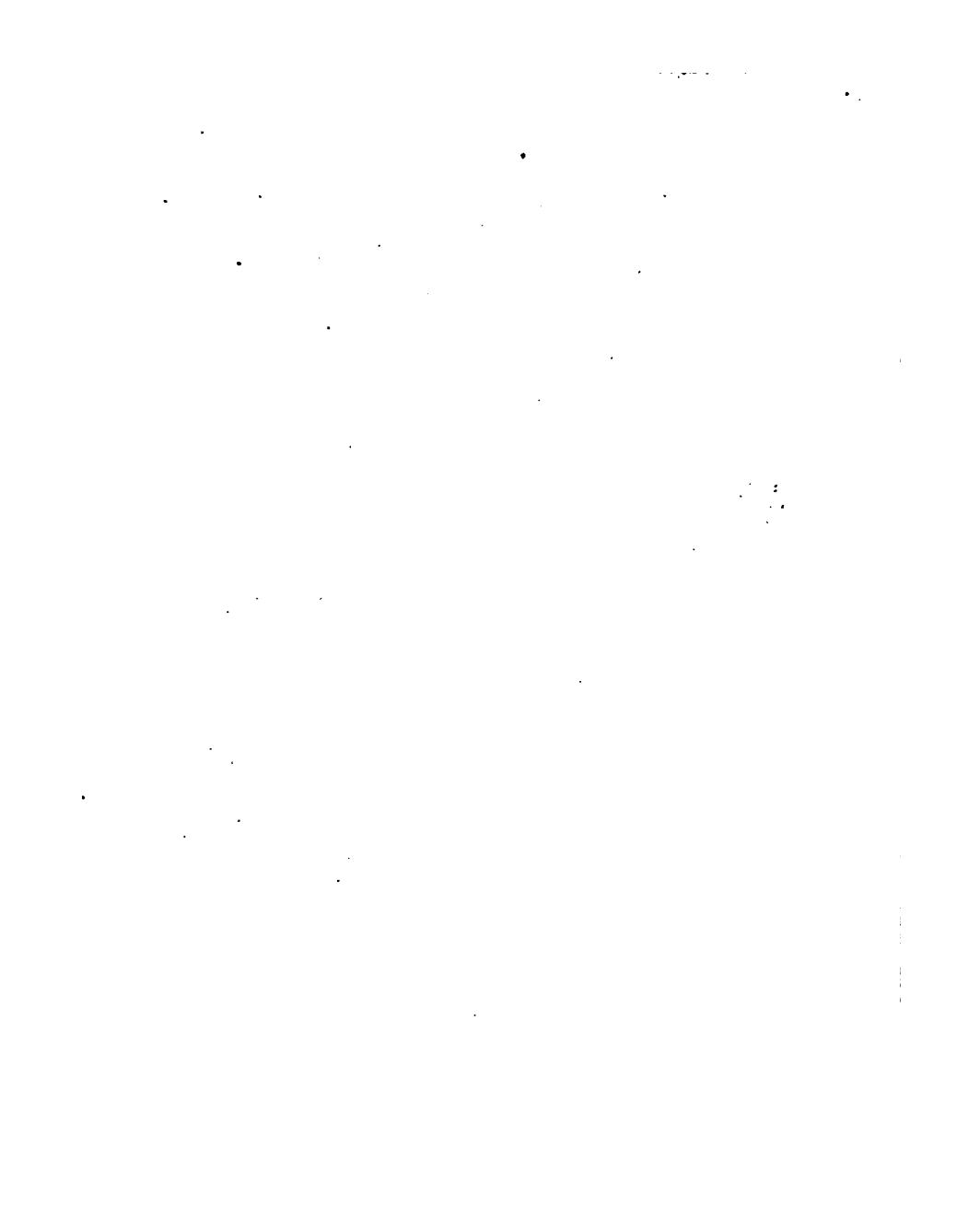


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THE LOST SUNBEAM.

THE SHADY TREE. THE WOVEN SUNBEAMS.





*With staff in hand, with weary feet I trod
For many a day and night that weary side,
I cut with stones which lay on the road,
I strung them myself my pain to hide.*

THE LOST SUNBEAM.
THE SHADY TREE.
THE WOVEN SUNBEAMS.

BY

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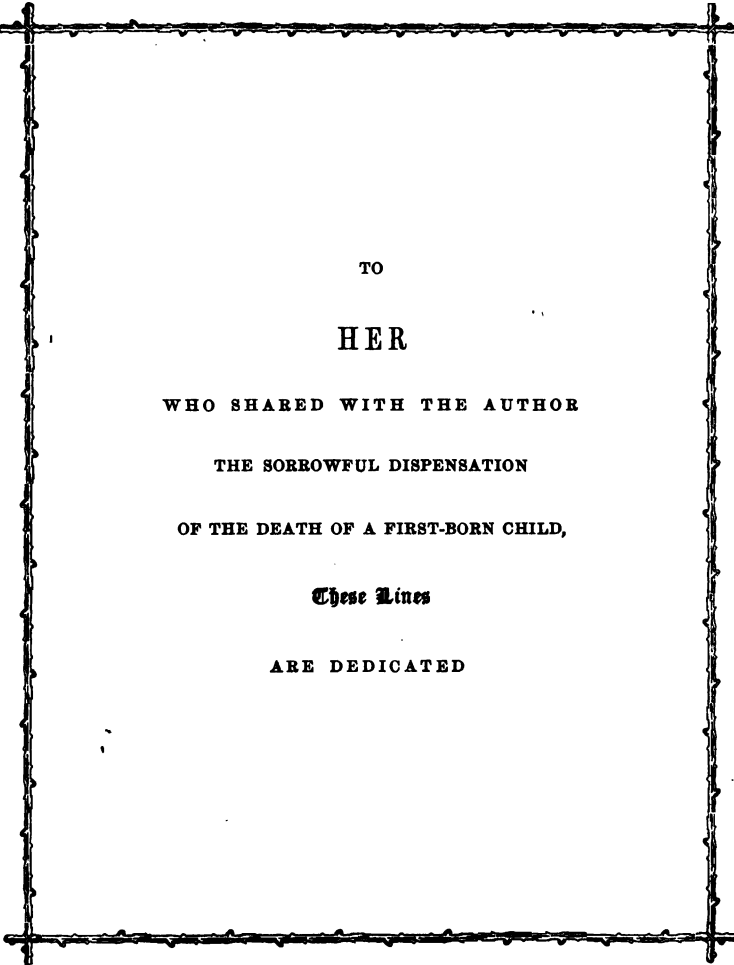
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TO
HER
WHO SHARED WITH THE AUTHOR
THE SORROWFUL DISPENSATION
OF THE DEATH OF A FIRST-BORN CHILD,

These Lines
ARE DEDICATED



Preface.

SORROW and Joy are capricious in their developments. Joy will make us laugh and cry; Sorrow will make us hang our harps upon the willows, or perhaps will pour forth its flooded waters in a stream of song. We cannot give any reasons why we do this or that, when the deep emotions of the heart are stirred; let us not be too exacting in requiring reasons from others.

When the heavy affliction of the death of a first-born child fell upon the Author, he found it soothing to the heart's wounds, to strike these few notes in a minor key; should they fail in waking a responsive echo in the mourner who reads these pages, he feels persuaded that

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they will at least be listened to by him with a friendly ear, as strains which helped to solace a grief so like his own.

Sorrow may reject such lines and thoughts as those contained in this little book ; but, on the other hand, it may accept them ; and should this latter be the case, it is hoped that the speaking of heart to heart may soothe with silent sympathy some long sorrowing hour. To speak, and yet be silent, is the privilege of a book ; and many a time the eye will not refuse to read, when the ear would refuse to hear.

Oh ! the preciousness of silence in the hour of heart-cutting grief—oh ! the misery of the minstrels and people “making a noise”^{*}—oh ! the jarring discord of volubè sympathy—oh ! the bitter mockery of commonplace condolence—oh ! for those who know how to speak with a pressure of the hand ; for those to whom God has given the mute eloquence of the eye ; for those who

^{*} Matt. ix. 23.

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do not pretend to *understand* our grief. He knows too little who pretends to know too much!

But happy is that mourner, who, in the hour of most sensitive sorrow, has the company of the ONE who was the "Man of Sorrows"—who, in the time of deepest grief, has near him the ONE who was "acquainted with grief." What a declaration is this concerning Jesus—He was "acquainted with grief." He took experience of it in all its power—its cutting, its rending, its depressing, its exhausting power. "A man acquainted with grief!"—whose heart is a book, stored with experiences of suffering—who understands all sorrow, who feels for it—who has heaven's own sedative for it. He is the only one that, without any fear of disappointment, the heart can fully trust in its heavy trial time of woe.

But he who would have such a sympathizer as this, must deeply realize the personality of Jesus; he must know Him as something more than the ONE whose

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name is to be found in creeds—who is the centre of a system of theology; he must know Him as the MAN Christ Jesus. In grief the heart seeks sympathy; and this, abstractions are not capable of affording. A statue may be perfect in all its proportions; but, cold and hard, it cannot feel—a truth may be perfect in all its bearings, but, cold and hard, it may carry no influence, exert no power. Our Lord is not a statue, but a man—He is not merely a theological, but a living truth.

These lines may help to while away some lonely hour, but the power and mastery over loneliness belongs only to One—and that One, Jesus; who was alone in the mountain, alone on the sea, and alone in Gethsemane.* 'Twas but "a stone's cast," that He withdrew Himself from His disciples, yet that "stone's cast" brought Him into deeper solitude than ever fell to the lot even of the most solitary man. Oh! what a comfort is it for the poor mourner that Jesus can enter into his loneliness—

• Matt. xxvi. 36.

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that He can compass it—that he can alleviate it. He was alone, that he might comfort the lonely.

The Author is well pleased to have an opportunity of thus pointing a sorrowing one to Him who came to heal the broken-hearted, for there is less in the following pages on this subject than he desires. The verses were not originally designed for publication; they were merely intended to carry off some of the surface-waters from the writer's own heart, when all the wells still remained full; but now they have found their way, almost by an accident, into the world; and they must be taken for just what they are, and nothing more. Had the Author proposed a treatise upon sorrow, surely the Man of Sorrows must have filled it from beginning to end.

The notes have been written to the verses; each note has also been limited to one page. This has made the choice of subject, and also its treatment, restricted; but this will, perhaps, not be without its advantage, for the

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heart will seldom in sorrowing times be willing to grapple with complex thought.

The pronoun "it" has been used instead of "he" or "she;" the reader will only too readily be able to make the needful change. The verses have also been printed consecutively at the end of the book, so that the casual reader may be able to follow unbroken the thread of each allegory. To be helpful in sorrow is the Author's aim—to have been so, will be no small part of his reward.





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Heart Dreams.

*Soft music made the waves one summer morn,
And tho' 'twas soft, it sounded merrily ;
And voice of harp, and flute, and winding horn,
Came o'er the distance vast most dreamily.*

WHAT mother is there who has not the birth of her babe heralded by some soft dreamy music in her heart? Her's may be a life of care, and a mother's fears may strive hard with a mother's hopes, yet some soft strains have floated through her heart—strains coming from afar—from o'er a "distance vast most dreamily." None can penetrate this "distance vast;" it is beyond all human research; and where the mother's joy first rises, and how it floats onward through the heart, is among the secret things which belong to God. Heart-dreams are a mother's portion from the Lord! And in the music which is heard in a mother's day-dreams, there is the mingling of many distinct sounds. The lisping prayer, the merry laugh, even the childish sob smothered on the mother's breast, in all the luxury of woe, have their moments in which each is heard with special distinctness, and then sinks back and mingles with the rest, as though it had almost done too much, and striven to live before its time. Thus children whisper before they live, and are born in the heart before they are born on the earth; the heart has a nursery as well as the house, and in that secret chamber the babe's first life is spent. And all this adds to the present woe. The loss is of two lives, and not of one; the music which all heard, the music which none but the mother heard, is stilled. Now that the little one hath left the earth, the heart recalls its day-dream of life, ere yet it came on earth. The mother's secret joy hath left behind a secret grief.

Unfathomable Thoughts.

*"Wherefore," I asked, "is this soft music played?
For none are dancing on the long-drawn strand;
Is it for children of this earth 'tis made,
Or wash these waves some brighter, distant land?"*

WE do not always intuitively understand the feelings of our own hearts. He must assuredly have had small communion with the deep mysteries of life, who declares that he knows the "wherefore" of every thought that passes through his mind, and every emotion that rises in his heart. It is no shame not to understand the deep thunders, or even the airy whisperings of the voices of our innermost being, when first their sounds are heard. Those are but shallow thoughts in which the understanding cannot lose its depth. And do we not sometimes seem spirited away by these our thoughts into the world of spirit; do we not feel that we cannot explain our thoughts or feelings by analogies or reasonings such as we use in common life; do we not try to catch up broken links of a chain, wherewith we seem to have been once bound to another world? We have thoughts for which there seem to be no earthly reasons, and we seek their interpretation from a higher distant land.

Is it any marvel that we understand not intuitively the thoughts which are the forerunners of the birth of an immortal; and is it any marvel that we understand not the thoughts which attend the departure of that immortal hence? Be thankful for the mystery of thy thoughts, and now let them lead thee onward to the mysteries of the other life. Thou hast profitted little by the gift of a child, if thou hast not been drawn near to the other world by its birth—nearer yet, by its death.

Increasing Mystery.

*Across the boundless sea, I looked in vain ;
Mine eye discerned no hills, no white-cliffed shore :
Yet as I looked, more cheerful grew the strain,
And louder far than it had been before.*

HOW often have we found that our proud reason, which fain would sit supreme over all the emotions of our being, has been refused allegiance, and *that*, by feelings and emotions so fragile in themselves, that we should have thought one argument strong enough to crush them all ! The heart will be joyful, or sad—its joys and sadness will ebb and flow—and yet we are not able to give a reason why. We must oftentimes be content to feel, and yet not be able to trace whence the feelings come.

Thus mysteriously have joyful feelings swelled within many a mother's heart, heralding the advent of a babe ; their voices growing louder and louder, refusing to explain themselves ; and to all our questionings giving but this answer, " We are here." And as it was before the babe was born, so also may it be, now that the babe has gone. We may have bright and cheerful thoughts ; yea, thoughts ever brightening more, and growing more cheerful, though we can see no earthly source from which such thoughts could come.

May that, which has been hitherto but soft music in thy heart, about thy child's birth to a second life, now swell into a cheerful strain. The joy of the heart need not be bounded by the seeing of the eye ; thou mayest rejoice, yea increase a thousand-fold in joy, though the world cannot discern why thou shouldst rejoice at all.

Sunbeams Bright.

*While thus perplexed, I saw a sunbeam bright
Dancing from wave to wave, in sportive glee ;
Where'er it passed, a tiny print of light
It left upon the ever-changing sea.*

“**A** SUNBEAM bright!” that is what our dead child was to us. We know not, perhaps we care not, what it was to others, it was a sunbeam bright to us. And how bright, and how brightening to all around ! Despite the darkness of the storm which hath swept over us, we can even still see glimmerings of that light—dull and phosphorescent they may be now, but we know of places and persons and things, which still bear an imprint upon them in our hearts, which tells us that once our child passed that way ; once it spoke to that person ; once it touched that thing. Memory consecrates the touches, the footprints, and the voices of the dead. There is the pen with which the merchant toiled ; the merchant's child once drew strange figures with it, which no accountant could add up, and those odd strokes enlivened for a moment that merchant's toil, and left a footprint of light upon the shifting waves of his losses and his gains. There is the work-box with which the mother wrought, and that mother's child often begged from her of its store, and made believe to work, and knotted up its reels of thread, and now that box hath a charm for that mother, and the charm is the dim reflection of those once happy days. That instrument is dear, not because skilful fingers drew sweet music from it, but because little hands once scrambled on it, and made child's music for that mother's heart. It may be that the little one tarried not long with any—but it hath left a gleam of light on all.

Uncareful Childhood.

*From wave to wave it leaped, 'till every one
It touched was crowned with gems of many a hue :
Straight coming from the glorious full-orbed sun,
'Twas wondrous what that little beam could do.*

THE uncarefulness of children is a sweet refreshment in the midst of a careworn world. When our brows are wrinkled, theirs are smooth; when our eyes are anxious, straining as though they would pierce to-morrow, theirs are bright, glittering with the enjoyment of to-day; when we are overwhelmed, they are buoyant; they skim the surface when we sink down into the depths. The flatness of careworn life effervesces at the touch of an uncareful child. And this is a part of the mission of a child; it is sent amongst us to bless as well as to be blessed—to school, as well as to be schooled; not only, should it live, to become by and bye a sharer of our sorrows, but even now to make us a partaker of its joys.

And verily the gems which childhood scatters are of "many a hue"—there is no monotony in the sounds of its merry laugh, no sameness in the postures of its graceful limbs, no weariness in its never-ending questions; insensibly, albeit we know it not, we slip back for a few moments into our well-nigh forgotten youth; and interests, long since become common-placisms, freshen up into being interests again. The old calculator, unconcerned over the arithmetic of millions, is all alive over the units of a child; the old philosopher, too wise to be amazed at the phenomena he can explain, joins in the wonder of a child; verily, the brightest touches on life's grey, cold waters are from these little limners' hands.

Transient Joy.

*I looked not long, ere all grew hushed and still ;
The music faded rapidly away :
Thick clouds came rolling o'er each neighbouring hill,
The tempest marr'd that glorious summer day.*

“NOT long,” alas ! ours has not been a lengthened joy ; a little while our sunbeam gilded life for us, and then left us to look out on its waters cold and grey. And how still and hushed all became in our home, and even in our hearts, before our sunbeam disappeared—it was the stillness that preceded the storm—the pause before the tempest’s rush. We missed first of all a bounding step, and then a merry laugh, and then the well-known voice—then came a silence in our home, a silence in our heart, as though the light atmosphere in which childhood sported were becoming heavy, and meet for it no more. Oh ! how thick the clouds gathered in our hearts, how shapely became our fears, how they rolled in upon us, none losing themselves in the far distance, but all loitering around, unbidden mutes, to officiate at the funeral of our joys ; how we feared that something was coming ; how we thought and spoke of it as “something,” and dared not whisper what in truth we knew too well. Oh ! how we hoped against hope, and bethought ourselves of many a gathering tempest which rolled away from over our heads, and burst afar off, and hoped that as it was then, even so would it be now. There was solemn silence before the tempest burst, and our sunbeam took its flight. Thrice happy he whose heart is schooled to calmly wait and watch, and look at gathering clouds, and know that whatever happens to the sunbeams on the earth, the Great Light is inextinguishable above them all.

The Storm Spirit.

*'Twas but a little while, and lo ! a form,
All swathed in night, strode o'er that placid sea :
I knew the fearful Spirit of the storm ;
His knotted scourge unveiled his mystery.*

THE chief vexers of this world's peace are not of mortal birth—the Storm-spirit comes forth from the world unseen. The Evil One, who hates all sights, all sounds of peace, is the great breaker of this world's peace; he works in man, he works by man, oh ! how fearfully he works upon man. The Storm-spirit was mayhap preparing to wreck thy child's happiness—to strike thy little one with a scourge of sorrow, the knots of which it required diabolical ingenuity to twist. Fiendish hate will condescend to wreak itself even upon a little child. It is a fearful thought; the Storm-spirit is waiting for each cradled babe. Ah ! little can we tell how many, even of childhood's sorrows, come straight from him that hates children; little also can we tell how many such sorrows have been escaped, because He who loves children has said of our little ones, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." The heart refuses to believe that the little child can have an enemy; that the one that has been all its days looked upon by loving eyes, and talked to by loving lips, and tended by loving hands, can have a deadly foe—the loving heart shrinks from connecting the tender flesh with the knotted scourge. Yet must the heart be held unwavering to the thought, yea, it must so deeply believe it, that it may now rejoice in that the tender babe has passed beyond the knotted scourge. Thou hast shrouded thy child in white; the garment in which the Storm-spirit would have enfolded it, would have been as black as night.

Scattered Gems.

*With rude and savage hand the crown he dashed
From every riptlet's brow ; and with a cry
Of rage he stamped them down, then fiercely lashed
Them into boiling surging agony.*

THE scourge of evil smites all things great and small. Its mark is seen in the canker of the unfolded bud, in the broken toy of the weeping child, in the marring of life's smallest, and yet most frequent joys. The sum total of human sorrow is swollen by the destruction of a multitude of almost infinitesimal joys. The Evil spirit robs us, not only of the crown jewels, but even of the diamond dust of life. What can be more pitiful than to see the destruction of a little child's joys? And have not we seen the riplets of our child's life uncrowned; have not we seen it turn from the morsel it once so much enjoyed; and drop from its feeble hand the toy it once so tightly grasped; and look with a lustreless eye upon the companions whom it once so fondly loved, and receive with a pathetic indifference the caresses it once so dearly prized? Were not all these only as trifles compared with the great things of life? Were they worthy of the attention of a Being of the world of spirit? Alas! even the marring of a child's joys, the Evil one considers a work worthy of himself. It may be that we have seen something even worse than this—the convulsive throe; the rising of the death-storm which we have not been able to avert. And all this, terrible as it seems now, might have been yet more terrible by and bye; there may have been fiercer strife with the man or woman, than there has been with the child—our departed one has only seen life's riplets uncrowned, we have seen life's billows upheaved.

The Dark Exchange.

*All now was dark; and sorrow filled mine heart;
Where was the sunbeam? where its merry light?
It seemed so sad from brightness thus to part;
And take instead the gloom of stormy night.*

“THIS is an hard saying, who can hear it,” were the words of some disciples who heard, but understood not, the mystery of Christ’s teaching, and who went back and walked with Him no more. And verily, the hardness of an affliction oftentimes proves heavier to be borne than its weight though it be crushing, or its point though it be piercing. At times the rebellious heart says that it is undeserved, at times that it is not needful, at times that it is cruel—it makes the perceptive power of man, the measure of the wisdom of the Lord, it fain would make its feeling His rule of action. We may feel grieved, we must never feel aggrieved by any dispensation of woe—we grieve and we submit—we are aggrieved and we rebel. He who thinks himself aggrieved by aught which God’s hand hath done, shall hear from God’s mouth the words, “Friend, I do thee no wrong.” No hard dealing cometh from the hand of the Lord. It may be that the very hardness with which brightness is parted from, shews that we are wedded to brightness too much. Put from thee then, all hard thoughts of God in this dark hour; what is too hard for flesh and blood, will be made easy by the working of the Holy Ghost. Thy Lord hath led the way; He exchanged the brightness of the mount of transfiguration for the dark picture of a child torn of the Devil; He passed from the upper chamber where He eat the passover with His disciples, to the garden of Gethsemane, where they all forsook Him and fled.

Attraction.

*"So fair wert thou, small beam," I cried aloud,
"That could I only tell where thou hast gone ;
I'd seek thee through the mist, and gloom and cloud,
For never beam on earth so brightly shone."*

☞ O a true believer the great delights of another world are pre-eminently spiritual—there, will he be free from sin—there, will he be in His presence where there is fulness of joy, and at His right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore. This will be the great delight; but the greater does not destroy the less; it is not too much to expect that the lights which twinkled so exquisitely on earth, shall not be absorbed or extinguished there. Shall we say, All is gone, and gone for ever? Nay! this cannot be; at any rate, when those that have been taken, are little ones who have departed in the Lord. With these, the heart will refuse to part; they live, only elsewhere than in this world of ours; and where they are, there would we be also. The heart's hopes may whisper with reference to the other world, and sanctified of the Spirit, help us to set our affections there. Many a parent has first been led to seek the higher world, because thither her little one had gone. A heaven of holiness is not lowered in its standard, because it is also a heaven of sentiment. Little ones, who have died in Christ, may be used of the Spirit to exercise an influence more mysterious than the loadstone, drawing us by a power, silent and invisible, but true. Oh glad hope! to be reunited to our child—to be in the same place with it again. O blessed land, bright with the presence of our Saviour, bright with the presence of our child,—He, the great light to rule the heart's eternal day—it, a lesser light, bright in the glory which streams magnificently from Him.

Death Whisperings.

*"Seek then," a voice in whispering accents said,
"The top of yonder mountain, high and steep;
For there thou'lt find the little beam which strayed
Awhile upon th' inconstant storm-vexed deep."*

HERE are voices which whisper to our souls; they whisper to us *from* another life, they whisper to us *of* another life; they come from no earthly preacher's lips, they fall upon no outward ear; it is a mystery how they speak, it is a mystery how we hear. And never are these whisperings plainer or more frequent than in the time when Death has come into our house, and laid his hand on some one that we love. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear, for death-whisperings are teachings from the Lord. And what doth the voice whisper now to thee, O sad heart-stricken one, in thy woe? It saith, "Enervate not thyself with grief; be not bewildered in thy grief—look up—climb up—strive thou to follow whither thy little one hath gone before. Look thou more upward toward the heaven, and less downward into the grave. Seek—seek above this world," saith the voice which speaketh to thee now; "brace thy soul for toil, for hard work it is to climb whither thy child hath gone." Other voices there are which intrude upon our outward ears,—they are the troublesome comfortings of the minstrels and people who are "making a noise;" they are oftentimes the suggestions of the Evil One through friendly lips, saying, "Find thine ease around; the waves will fall, the sky will clear again; thou art afflicted enough by sorrow without afflicting thyself with toil." But heed them not. If thou wouldst ever find thy child and see its glory, and rejoice in its felicity, brace thyself to journey heavenwards.

Mountain Paths.

*With staff in hand, with weary feet I trod
For many a day and night that mountain side;
Oft cut with stones which lay upon the road,
Oft striving from myself my pain to hide.*

ⒶDLE dreamers about heaven know little of the hard wayfar-
ing of the soul; they sport while others toil, they travel
upon a level road, while others climb a mountain side; the
path they follow in their dreams requires no staff, cuts with no
sharp-pointed stone, involves no day or night of pain. But he
whose eyes are open, travels heavenward amid realities; yea, it is
amid realities that he attains heavenly knowledge, and a heavenly
frame of mind; though all be the free gift of grace, there is never-
theless the discipline of spiritual wounds and toil. Ours is the
"many a day and night," for we must endure unto the end; ours
are the fightings without and the fears within; ours the thorn in
the flesh; ours the buffeting of Satan; ours the pressing beyond
measure. These purchase not heaven, but these lie on the road
to heaven; he who would travel above earth must tread a moun-
tain path; and mountain paths are rough. "Oh that I had wings
like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest; I would
hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest." So sang
the Psalmist; so sang he of ONE afflicted more sorely than him-
self; and lo! that which fell not to the portion of the babe of
Bethlehem (for He must be a man of sorrows), hath fallen to
the lot of our little one, who hath been taken away from all
sorrow. To gain the mountain top without scaling the mountain
side hath been its gift; it hath been upborne whither thou must
climb.

Everlasting Childhood.

*At length the top I gained, and there I found
A tiny lake in which the sunbeam played :
And trees of rarest worth all stood around,
And with their waving boughs soft music made.*

HERE will be spheres of action in the life that is to come,— vast orbits within which some will range, and lesser orbits in which others shall move. This is the idea which we desire to impress upon the reader's mind, by "the tiny lake." We cannot but believe that our children will be children evermore,— that amid the great family of the redeemed, many children will be found. To us the thought is full of pleasure. Other of our children are growing up to be men and women ; the very years as they pass seem to rob us of their childhood, but years can never rob us of the childhood of a child in heaven. In *memory* and in *prospect* the departed one remains our "child." And so, as old age comes creeping upon us apace, and those who were our children have now gone forth as men and women into the world, and we are left alone ; we can sit by our fireside, and dream with unclosed eyes, and think how that when our little one left earth, it was a "child"—then mayhap we shall be able to draw nigh the spirit-land ; our timid hearts will shrink the less, when we see therein "a child"—our child,—and if bright days have passed, we shall believe in bright days yet to come. "Within the tiny lake the sunbeam *played*." Oh think not for a moment that there is any pause in the being of thy child ; that the music of its life is gone ; let no tear of sorrow start because thou seest other children at their sport ; they gleam upon the waves of troubled waters, thine glitters as on a lake of glass.

Companionship in Light.

*Then spake the voice,—“ The everlasting hills
Full many a lake and beam like this possess :
Lakes which are fed by ever-flowing rills,
Beams streaming from the Sun of Righteousness.*

“ **F**ULL many” shall be the children in heaven. We gather children together here, that they may be joyous one with another for awhile; God will gather them upon the everlasting hills that they may be joyous one with another for ever. Thy child, O sorrowing one, hath companionship in light. Bethink thee of the richness and fulness of the number of children in joy; and richer is the one that hath entered such companionship, than they which tarry amid the poverty-stricken companionships of earth. For this child, thou shalt have no care to find companionship, and no more bitter care to break off companionship which leads to ill. Swift brotherhood and sisterhood are found amongst the redeemed. And by “full many a lake,” we would pourtray the distinctness of the circle of enjoyment of every little one with God; and when we say that these lakes are fed by “ever-flowing rills,” we would point out how uncloying, how varied are the pleasures of children with the Lord.

How soon our children cloy! how soon do they use up the measure of enjoyment which earthly things contain; for these are not fed by any rills, they soon dry up, and mud and slime are all that they can shew; but ever varying, by fresh flowings forth from God, are the joys within the circle of our child's new sphere—ever full and ever fresh are they, for in His presence there is the fulness of joy, and at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Above Sorrow.

*"Look down! dark mists and clouds thou seest below;
And on the sea, where played this glorious beam,
Mark how the lightnings flash, and fiercely throw,
Their angry fires—their forked and livid gleam.*

WHEN the traveller Don Ulloa was in Peru, he was stationed for some time on the summit of Cotopaxi, a mountain three miles above the level of the sea. "While there," said he, "the clouds surrounded the mountains to a vast distance, representing the sea, with our rock like an island in the midst of it." When this happened, he and his companions heard the horrid noises of the tempests which discharged themselves on Quito and the neighbouring countries. They saw the lightnings issue from the clouds, and heard the thunders roll far beneath them, and whilst the lower regions were involved in tempests of thunder and rain, they enjoyed a delightful calm. "The wind," said he, "was hushed, the sky was clear, and the enlivening rays of the sun moderated the severity of the cold." And verily, if we except the "severity of the cold," his description will for the most part serve to bring before us the scene embodied in our verse. Our departed child hath risen above life's tempests, and life's mists. The fierce impulses of passion can never rend it, the lurid fearful sights which are to be seen in life can never terrify it, the damp cold mists can never encircle it.

It is not that these things are done away; we know, alas! only too well that they are not; have we not to shade our eyes from many terrors, and to grope our way through many mists? but our babe is above them all,—clouds, mists and lightning gleams have no more to do with it—for ever!

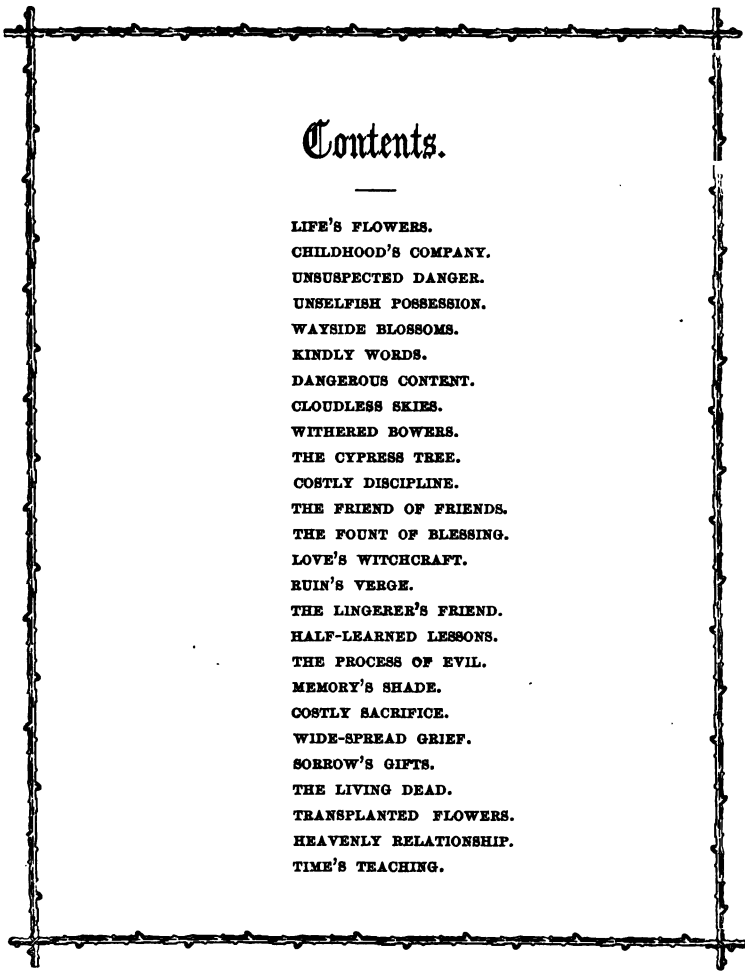
The Bright Exchange.

*"Was that a place for this bright beam to stay?
Could it have lived in that fierce swell and foam?
Look down! look round! thy heart will wisely say,
That here indeed thou'st found THE SUNBEAM'S HOME."*

"BLESSED are the dead which die in the Lord"—blessed in whither, blessed in whence they have been taken—blessed in what they have been taken to, blessed in what they have been taken from—blessed in reaching rest, and in escaping from unrest. How knowest thou from what thy child hath been delivered? how canst thou calculate what would have been the number and the force of its temptations; how canst thou tell in what great jeopardy may have been its spiritual life? Fierce may have been its buffetings; bitter its struggle for existence; hard its throes of body; wild the tossings of its mind; and now it is safely sheltered from all this—with even the *possibilities* of such things, it hath no more to do. And when seen from God's own heights, how wild, how fierce appear the foam and swell of life; to know the dangers of the world's unrest, we must look down upon it from the rest of the Lord.

And so, poor mourner, wilt thou not find it in thine heart to rejoice as well as weep over the sunbeam that hath gone; when thou feelest thy heart sore missing thy child on earth, wilt thou not ascend in heart, and rejoice with thy child in a place far better than the earth; wilt thou not confess that it hath found its truest home—the home, of which all earthly homes are but broken and imperfect types—that it hath passed from a tarrying to a resting place—from the wild throes of tempest life, to that calm sphere of peaceful life, where all such things are known no more.





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Life's Flowers.

*A rich man own'd a garden full of flowers,
Whose varied colours dazzled every eye;
Thick set was it with rarest plants, and bowers
Of creeping jessamine, whose tendrils arch'd on high.*

YOUNG children are the flowers of life; they are life's perfume, life's poetry, life's music, and life's joy. Dark may be life's clouds, but they twinkle among them like stars; hard may be life's road, but they bloom at the way-side amid its stones; gnarled and blasted may be life's fairest trees, but they twine around them and garnish them with their blossoming folds. A child is a remembrance of Eden—of what man was; a child is a preacher of heaven—of what man must be. This rich man's garden was his home, and his children were its flowers—"varied flowers!"—for each child hath its own peculiar loveliness—its individuality of beauty, as well as its individuality of life. That is no true parent's eye, in which each child hath not its own peculiar grace; in harmony and not in unison are the tones and colours of the little ones which grace our homes; in a perfect mystery they keep distinct, and yet they blend. In the household which Jesus loved, dwelt three; He loved them all, He loved them each. "Now Jesus loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus." We too, say AND; we not only weigh our golden chain, but we count its links; we not only gaze upon a spangled group, but we resolve it into its own specific stars. And he who has but one child is jealous even over it, and with love's prism beholds varied colours which meet no common eye. Thus distinct are little ones in life, thus distinct must each remain in death. This is love's gain in life; this is love's gain in death.

Childhood's Company.

*No greater joy had he, than, up and down,
Amid these flow'rs to walk each summer's day ;
Their greatest charm that they were all his own ;
That none were known around, so fair, so bright, as they.*

THE purest joys on earth are to be found in the society of children. Happy is that man who is capable of being made happy by a child. But to enjoy, and to learn from, and to be blest by children, we must tarry awhile with them ; not too long, lest they relax us for life's stern duties ; not too short, lest their dew-like influence do but moisten the surface, and penetrate not the depths of our hearts. Oh ! what a world of vice were driven from the earth, if men and women did but seek their chiefest joys at home ; they would find that the exhilarating influence of children has power to supply the stimulant which the heart craves, and the sparkling effervescence of home would make them independent of the frothy excitement of the world. But he who would thus be blest by children must walk up and down amongst them—to him they must be flowers, and flowers of price ; he must find some time to tarry among them ; he must not only work for them, and think for them, but he must be with them. Children have a claim upon the presence of their parents ; to deny which, is to do an injury alike to them and to ourselves. Alas ! that the outer circles of claims are filled with such diligence, and the inner circle that girdles the very heart is so often left untrodden by a father's foot, ungladdened by a father's voice. O thou who hast children—God's flowers—tarry long enough with them to know them, and be known of them—yet not too long—the perfume which refreshes for a while, at length may overpower.

Unsuspected Danger.

*This rich man was not churlish of his gold,
He never held his hand from God's own poor ;
No bitter tale of sorrow e'er was told,
But that he tried to find the sufferer a cure.*

HOW often do we fix our eyes upon some one Christian grace, and suppose that it will compensate for shortcoming in some other grace ; or that it will avert from us some spiritual ill. We wonder that such and such a thing could happen to a man who in such and such points was manifestly carrying out the will of God. Insensibly the Christian thus shelters himself, and beneath the shade of one Christian virtue, there develop many un-Christian faults. Satan has no objection to our looking steadily at any *one* effort that we are making to carry out the will of God ; yea, he will make no objection to our further effort after perfection in that one point, provided we keep to it, and it *alone*. Quiet and unnoticed growth is what he seeks for his weeds, and from those weeds he will in due season distil a poison which will do amazing evil to the soul. The love of earth will in some unexpected form creep around our hearts, all the more surely if we believe that we are not in danger of it, or that we are secure against it. Thus it is here ; he whose heart is not snared by the too-absorbing love of gold, has that same heart snared by the too-absorbing love of his children.

The more advanced we are in rejecting the grosser temptations of the world, and the world's wealth, the finer will our snares become ; some are bound in iron chains, and some with silken threads. The snares of the outward world become transferred to the privacy of home.

Unselfish Possession.

*Nor did he hide his flowers, and selfishly
Forbid all eyes to see their many a hue ;
But all were free to look at them, and see
How, day by day, they throve, and fairer, lovelier, grew.*

LET us remember that our children have been given to us for others as well as for ourselves. We may be unselfish in the distribution of our gold, but wilfully selfish in keeping our children wholly to ourselves. God is our great example. He gave His Son, and with Him He also freely gives us all things. Thou art unapproachable, O Lord, but not inimitable in this Thy love—though with a feeble effort, yet would we imitate Thee, and bless others with whatsoever is dearest to ourselves. Gold can do much, but in truth there is much which gold cannot do—gold cannot freshen up the heart again ; gold cannot produce the light that twinkles in a child's bright eyes ; gold cannot create the laugh that rings from its rosy lips—gold can buy the richest wine that is pressed from the sunniest grapes, but the heart's stimulant from merry childhood, no gold can get. Reader ! if the Lord have spared thee a little one, keep not thy child too much to thyself ; let blessing begin betimes to flow forth from thy child ; grudge not thy servant, or poor neighbour, a touch of its soft hand, or even a kiss of its dimpled cheek.

It is a sweet remembrance that the child whose transplanting gave birth to these lines, was spared a moment to see the poor bed-ridden creature, who loved to look upon a child—to beam the light of childhood's sunny smiles upon one who was ever skirting the valley of the shadow of death.

Early blessing, she has been early blest.

Wayside Blossoms.

*A special charm around these flow'rs was cast,
Because they had few peers in loveliness ;
Yet he who own'd them, never proudly pass'd
The hedge-side blossoms, in their humbler, lowlier, dress.*

LET none despise the humble children of the poor. In comparison with the well-fed, well-taught, well-clothed children of the rich, they may be but hedge-side blossoms ; but as there is one common Creator for all flowers, so is there one common Father for all children. The most ragged rose-bush in the dusty hedge may call God "Creator," as well as the most delicate plant in the well-watered bed ; do they not drink their juices from the same God's earth, do they not expand their leaves in the same God's sky ? Even so, the children of the poor are blossoms in God's eyes, as well as the children of the rich—blossoms in the great register of all that He hath made : on the same page of the roll book of created things is their name written side by side with ours. The most heartless form of unfeeling pride is that which makes the rich man look down upon the poor man's child.

He who scorns a child denies the instincts of humanity, fails in the sympathies of his kind, and repudiates the example of his Lord.

If thou, reader, hast ever been overtaken in this fault, bethink thee that some of those whom thou hast scorned are mayhap thy child's companions now ; and henceforth let thine eye kindle upon the poor man's child, and thy hand be bountiful to him, and thy smile encourage him ; remembering the childhood of thy Lord on earth, and the childhood of thy child in heaven.

Kindly Words.

*Nor scorn'd he any poor man's garden plot,
The simple flowers, the all that he could raise ;
The blushing rose, the blue forget-me-not,
Were sure to win from him a word of kindly praise.*

LET us bestow kindly words upon the children of the poor. Very often the poor man's child is his ALL; and to say a kindly word to his child is to speak to his whole being, the innermost fibres of which will vibrate at the welcome sound. A kindly word is never thrown away! Kindly words are oftentimes reproductive seeds, and many a golden sheaf has been reaped from them, upon what we thought to be hard, and unprofitable soil. Often has the poor man thought all the more of his children, when he saw that they were thought much of by others; the appreciation with which they have met has been an outward testimony, confirming the inward testimony of his heart. And who can tell how much the poor father or mother has been encouraged to tend the little ones, when they have seen that they were made something of, not only by themselves, but by others—that they took place, not only amid their family, but amid their kind? It is the natural tendency of the mind to try and improve that which has been commended—not to rest satisfied with what has been attained, but to stretch out after something more.

The poor are no exception to the rule; let their children be noticed, and they will strive to make them more worthy of our notice; they will learn to think much of those, who are thought much of by others.

Reader! thou hast parted with a precious child; by a kind word thou mayest make more prized some child that is left behind.

Dangerous Content.

*Thus happy spent this rich man many a day,
His heart, perhaps, too full of deep content ;
When in a strange and unexpected way,
While walking 'mid his flowers, a trial deep was sent.*

AND can a man's heart be "too full of deep content?" is a question which, perhaps, a bereaved parent is inclined to ask. Does not the Heavenly Father love to see His children happy; does not the Great Creator wish His creatures to drink deeply of the streams of joy, which well forth from the depth of His own loving and gracious heart,—was I then too happy with my child? O sorrowful one, thou mayest have been—not too happy—but too full of deep content—too satisfied with thy treasures—too reposing upon thy earthly blessing. Thou, an immortal, wast being too much filled by that which was mortal; thy horizon was being bounded by too circumscribed a line; those little hands, which used to clasp thy neck so tight, albeit thou knewest it not, were held up before thine eyes, and shut out the view of what God would have thee see—that which is far beyond.

There is a content which is too deep for the soul's good; a content, which the soul must never find on earth, or in anything of earth; a content in which the soul is riding peacefully at anchor, instead of voyaging onward towards the eternal rest. Thy little one may have been an anchor to keep thee immoveable, even though strong tides seemed to bear thee up, and float thee onward; thou wast preferring the harbour to the ocean, the anchor to the sail. This deep content of earth would have missed for thee the deeper far content of heaven.

Cloudless Skies.

*The sun waxed hot, and fiercer still it grew,
Fiercer each day; for on the thirsty ground,
Not e'en one friendly cloud its shadow threw,
Nor sign of rain, nor breeze, could be discerned around.*

THE warmth of uninterrupted prosperity often increases until it becomes a fierce and dangerous heat. The furnace, heated one seven times more than its wont, was not half so dangerous to the bodies of Shadrach and his fellows, as is the ever-increasing heat of unbroken prosperity to our souls. We dread the cold; it were wiser far to dread the heat. Clouds and their shadows are necessary to moderate the heat of the sun, and his beams. "One friendly cloud!" Yes! clouds are our friends; refreshing rains fall from them, the many-coloured bow of promise arches in them; they give the oak of the forest to drink from their abundance, and they nourish the grass-blades with their drops. Let us not love the lights of life to the exclusion of its shadows; let us not say to the one in gay clothing, "Come thou here;" and to the one in sombre raiment, "Stay thou there;" some of the most precious of God's gifts have been brought by servants whose livery was dark; because of the colour of the livery, despise not thou the gift. He who wills to have no cloud, wills, albeit he knows it not, to have heat so strong that it will prove his hurt. A broken sky may consist with unbroken peace; there is a long perspective heavenwards between pillared clouds. A royal duke once found death in a butt of wine; in measure it might have served him; in excess, it overwhelmed him. Ephraim was as an unturned cake, and so became burned and of little worth. "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God."

Withered Bowers.

*Then to his jess'mine bowers the rich man hied,
Quite sure to find a shelter from the sun ;
But lo ! each once thick bower in vain he tried,
The fierce, the fearful heat had withered every one.*

THE heat and drought spoken of here, can be understood only by those who in some measure at least have spiritual minds, and are exercised in the divine life. They know that prosperity has in itself a drying-up effect upon the heart. There are many real evils of which nothing may be known, until they declare themselves by irrevocable results—and thus, for want of a spiritual consciousness, some are utterly destroyed ; but it is not thus with the people of God, they are made to feel the reality of the evil, and then to seek a shelter from its power. But God's people do not always find a shelter exactly where they expected it ; they run to some well-known resource, but it fails them—it too has felt the withering power of unbroken prosperity, and will be of no use until it be refreshed and made green again. How often do we find that sermons, prayers, communions, meditations have insensibly lost their influence ; what we found in them once, as a means of grace, we find not now. We may be too far gone for restoration by any ordinary means, God must take us in hand, and deal with us in some extraordinary way. Is it not often the case that our means of grace wither without our perceiving it—have we not been delighting and satisfying ourselves apart from them—have we not been doing without them, until we were made to feel our need of them ?

The same sun often injures the resources of the soul, and the soul itself.

The Cypress Tree.

*Thus stood he in his garden sore perplexed,
Mourning the havoc, which the heat had made ;
When in a garden far away, half vexed
He saw an old man sitting 'neath a cypress shade.*

THIS old man is one who has had chastening experiences of God. The cypress, which is the recognized emblem of sorrow, represents a bereavement, which has fallen to his lot—a bereavement, sanctified, but still abiding. Behold, how this experienced and chastened Christian is able to remain out in the heat, and yet is sheltered from it. Is he not an emblem of some of the Lord's people? Does not the abiding and sanctified remembrance of a bereavement keep us from being dazzled by the brightness, or relaxed by the heat of prosperity? Yes; thus many a Christian has been able to endure what otherwise might have overcome him.

There are those who are worse off than the man that has a cypress tree in his heart. Half-vexed oftentimes are we, when we see others able to remain unmoved amid the very circumstances by which we are severely tried; we see them with a safeguard, whilst we are exposed; we see them at peace when we are distressed; we wonder why we are not as favoured as they? We forget their experiences—the way by which they have attained to what we desire; we see such things “afar off.” If we are to be even as they, “afar off” must be brought nigh even to our doors.

“No affliction is for the present joyous, but grievous, but *afterward* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit.” Sanctified affliction's gain is reaped not only in heaven, but on earth.

Costly Discipline.

*"I'd give a thousand golden crowns," said he,
"That I had such a grateful shelter near;
A thousand crowns for e'en one single tree,
For I must faint if I stay long unsheltered here."*

HOW little do we know the price at which some spiritual positions are obtained. There was a dark history attached to the shining garment and the conquering palm—"these are they that have come out of great tribulation." And whilst all is of the free grace of God, and through the merits of the Saviour's blood, there is little doubt but that individual suffering and discipline precede the attainment of some of the highest positions in the spiritual life. The form of this suffering and discipline must be of God's choosing, and not ours. Just as the rich man would have given his thousand golden crowns willingly, yet would not give a flower; so we will part with that which touches us but little—with that which can be easily spared, but not with that which, like his flower, has to do with the quick and marrow of our happiness.

How many precious things are there, which thou, O sorrowful one, wouldest have freely given to God; but He will have what He seeth fit to take, and not what thou seest fit to give. There would have been but little discipline for thy soul in the loss of that which thou wouldest never miss, but there is deep discipline in the loss of that which touches thee in the quick. Spiritual positions, especially of calm repose, like the old man's under the cypress-tree, are seldom cheaply won; the way to many a blessing is long and rough; the soul's most grateful shelter comes from the tree which throws the heaviest shade.

The friend of friends.

*Half fainting thus was he, when lo ! there came,
Walking amid the flowers, a well-known friend ;
Dearest of all dear friends was He, the same
Who oft in infancy used o'er his cradle bend.*

JESUS amid the children is a picture especially dear to the parent's heart. We shudder at the deep anguish of Gethsemane ; we bow down our heads at the still deeper mystery of Golgotha ; we wonder and adore at the miracles, which it is impossible for us to explain, but when we contemplate Jesus amid the children, then we seem to understand ;—we understand Him, not with the *head*, (who can fathom the depths of love, which made Him take up the little children in His arms and bless them ?) but with the *heart*. The comprehension of the heart will oft-times unfold a truth too large, it may be also too subtle, for the comprehension of the head. Jesus is a lover of children ; and what volumes does this speak to every parent's heart ! It is a most sweet and comfortable thought to think of Jesus, walking amid our children. If, in dedication and prayer, our children be given to Him, if His right to walk amongst them, and to deal with them, be recognized, assuredly amid them He thus will walk.

Let us therefore invite our Lord, and say, " Have free access, O Great Friend, to my garden and its plants—to my nursery and its little ones—walk Thou there when Thou wilt—be ever welcome to observe, to direct, and by the influence of Thy presence to control and to suggest. Come not Thou into the chamber of my little ones, only at the set times of morning and evening prayer ; but walk Thou there at Thine own sweet will—not only mine, but also my children's Friend."

The Fount of Blessing.

*Who carefully his earlier years had taught,
Who richly had his after years endowed ;
Who from a distant sunny land had brought
For him the flowers of which his heart was now so proud.*

IT is the privilege of a believer to recognize every good gift as coming to him through Christ. His words are these, "What have I that I have not received?" Thus, all things become sanctified to him; and whilst he lives in this realization, he feels, come what will, that all is well with him. It is when we forget this, that we think of ourselves as independent proprietors, and call upon the Lord to assert His rights, oftentimes by discipline which it is hard to bear.

Let the believer avoid the error of thinking that he may have received one good thing or another from Christ, but not all; it is when we see that all has come from Him, that we see also that all may be dealt with by Him. He takes but a narrow view of Christ's connection with him, who thinks that Jesus has to do with his soul, and nothing else. The believer can trace through his life the loving kindness of his Lord: one golden thread runs through its storied tapestry, one silvery stream through all its varied landscape; it is all the same love, only shewing itself in many different ways.

Can we wonder that the love which bestows a gift, should manifest itself yet further in taking thought about the appropriation of that gift?

Thus does the love of Jesus—through earlier and later years it is the same, for He Himself is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever.

Love's Witchcraft.

*Gently, the object of His early care
He chid, for dallying 'mid the flowers so long ;
"How oft," said He, "I've warned thee to beware,
Lest e'en for thy stout frame, the sun should prove
too strong."*

PERFUME hath overcome the strongest brain; heat hath relaxed the stoutest muscle; music hath unstrung the firmest nerve. Samson fell upon Delilah's lap! He that hath wrestled with wild beasts in the spiritual life, and wrenched their hideous jaws asunder, and felt himself the stronger for the fight, hath oftentimes been relaxed by the hot sunshine of home's bright joys, and by the witching spell of childhood's love. Strong souls which stood undaunted before persecution's blast, have fainted away beneath the influence of fireside heat. Stout men are subdued, not by force but fraud.

Hast thou, O mourning one, been *dallying* amid thy flowers; have thy children been, not thy heart's refreshment, but its intoxication,—not its blessing, but its snare? Wert thou ever found dallying when thy Lord was beckoning,—entranced with the warbled notes of earth, when He would have thee hearken for the higher melodies of heaven? It may be that thou knewest not how drunken thou wast with love of earth, until thou wast sobered by the hand of this, the higher love of heaven.

Reader! suffer not thyself henceforth to be deceived; just as a man may be sun-stricken amid flowers, so mayest thou be soul-stricken among children. Christ gently chides, where God might have been fiercely wroth.

Ruin's Verge.

*"Had'st thou much longer in the sun delay'd,
Thou might'st not only strength, but life have lost :
The want, in such fierce heat, of friendly shade
Hath proved to many a man, of bitter, lasting cost."*

E little know how near ruin we have sometimes been. We have been under temptations, and in circumstances which in themselves had power to work our soul's eternal ill; we have been saved by an interference which prevented these from coming to their natural conclusion. That conclusion would have been our ruin, that interference has been by Christ. There are temptations and circumstances, the "much longer" of which would have been the soul's death; we escape, not because of any want of power in the tempter, but because of the superior power of Christ.

It may be, dear reader, that thou hadst reached the point at which "much longer" or even "a little longer" would have been fatal; spiritual strength was for a long time evaporating; thou wast approaching the point from which men are hardly raised. But thy Lord, who seeth whither things have been tending, is not purposed to let thee die; He knoweth what thou knewest not;—whence thy peril came. Thou wouldest have had thy little one, were it but two or three years more; canst thou tell what those two or three years would have done? Ever are we thinking that our loss hath come too soon—much too soon; or perhaps, a little too soon; who ever feels at the moment of his loss, that that is exactly the right time in which to lose? We can bring ourselves to say *by and bye*; our tongue cleaves to the root of our mouth when it is bidden to say now.

The Lingerer's Friend.

*And then aside his tottering feet He led,
Guiding his feet, for he had lost his sight ;
With tenderest hand He bathed his aching head,
And on His bosom pillowed it the live-long night.*

“**A**ND while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand,”—thus was Lot drawn forth from Sodom.—“The Lord being merciful to him.” The merciful dealing of the Lord with lingerers, will supply some of the most wonderful incidents in the history of the road of life—the “bringing the believer forth,” and the “setting him without,” are acts full of as wondrous love as the bringing him within. Thus, perhaps, is Jesus dealing now with thee, O sorrowing one; thou wast a lingerer, and He is laying hold of thee by the hand, and drawing thee forth. Be not afraid to entrust thyself to Jesus; say not, “I am blind, I cannot see my way, I know not whither He will lead me.” Jesus guides the feet; He condescends to lead *tottering* feet, such as thine are now. When our spiritual vision has become clouded, and we see not our way out of the place of peril to the soul; when we are conscious that all is not well with us, and yet know not how to make it well; then, let us but totter with Him, and He will guide our feet. If thou wilt now allow Jesus to be thy physician and thy friend, He will touch thee with a tender hand; He will carry thee all through thy soul-sickness in every stage; He who washed His disciples' feet, will bathe thy head; He who suffered John to lie upon His breast, will suffer thee to lie there too. When Jesus guides our feet from others, it is that He may lead us nearer to Himself. He who goes with Him, not knowing whither He goeth, shall at last find himself upon His breast.

Half-learned Lessons.

*When morning came, once more the rich man bent
His steps to where the lovely flow'rets grew ;
To tarry there, a shorter while content,
But ah ! how little of his foolish heart he knew.*

AH ! how little do we know of ourselves ! We think that we have learned Christ's lessons, when we have not ; that we have become wise, and can use our blessings with moderation ; but there are many lessons which we cannot learn without discipline—without chastisement—without practical sorrow. How often have we, after a hint from God, determined on being moderate in the enjoyment of earthly good, and earthly love ; but we forgot our teachings, and had not Christ interposed, our souls might have become parched, almost unto death. It is well for the believer, that Christ knows more of his heart than he knows himself, and that He, in wise and firm love, acts upon this knowledge. Half-learned lessons are easily forgotten, and with these, Christ, as the teacher, never will be content. To be awakened to a sense of danger—to have a consciousness of spiritual faintness, and short-coming, and earthliness is not enough ; in the deep realities of the divine life, we must learn more of ourselves than this.

It may be that we are saying to ourselves of the child that is gone, "If only I had my lost one back again, how watchful would I be over myself ; how carefully would I abstain from heart idolatry ; how would I be willing to measure out my love." Ah, how little thou knowest of thine own heart ! thou wouldest weigh, but not with the balance of the sanctuary—thy measure would hold too much.

The Process of Evil.

*Amid his flowers he would have stayed again
'Till Death had finished what he had begun,
Parching the blood in ev'ry half-filled vein,
Shooting a dart in ev'ry beam of that bright sun.*

MANY of Satan's processes upon the soul require a lengthened period, in order that they may be successfully carried out. Comparatively few of his attempts are accompanied with violence; slowly and imperceptibly he carries on, and carries out his work. Seldom are we tried by temptations external to our ordinary circumstances, but continually by temptations incidental to them. It is by steadily keeping us in a position of temptation, that Satan often succeeds; climate is more fatal than the sword; we may be enervated even unto death. Hereafter the child of God will see how many evils which Satan began, were left unfinished, only because of His interference on their behalf. The unfinished works of the Evil One will be amid the wonders which shall engage the attention of the saints in eternity; "evil arrested" will seem as wonderful as "good bestowed." How dost thou know, poor afflicted one, but that had this child lived, whose death thou art now mourning so sore, every day of its life would have parched the juices of thy soul, and weakened thee for that spiritual life which needs all the strength that thou canst have? Thou hast been saved from a long and sure temptation—from a temptation in which perhaps thou must have perished—albeit pleasantly.

Sunbeams may be the messengers of death; their brightness does not insure their being harmless, even as the glitter of the sword does not warrant that it will not wound.

Memory's Shade.

*But ere he left his couch, his flowers to see,
His friend had early to his garden been,
And planted there a dark but lovely tree,
Whose twining branches formed a thick and leafy screen.*

THE memories of the dead, when sanctified, throw a chastened and a hallowed shade athwart the soul. The memories of our departed children are intended in the beneficence of God to have the influence of realities; our dead are thus still to live; our silent ones are thus still to speak. The influence of our living children is, though insensibly, yet really, ever pressing upon us; the influence of our departed one should ever do the same. The place of a departed child must never be filled up—the tree was planted in the spot where the flower had grown. Other little ones may find plenty of sunny room within our hearts, but the memory of our departed one must ever fill its own peculiar place. And do not be afraid because there is a shade of darkness about the memory of the dead,—do not say, “I shrink from sad memories, and do not believe that they can ever have a charm for my soul.”

Ah! it is not without meaning, that we say, “a dark but lovely tree.”

Examine the tree, whose thick growth of leaves makes it look at a distance one deep mass of shade—go close to it; every branch is graceful in its curves, every leaf is delicate in its tissues. So be it with the memory of this little one; if the bodily presence was full of little graces, why should not the memory be so too? Thou must not think that in death all is taken away and nothing is bestowed; the memory of a departed child is a fruit-laden tree, which can both shade and feed a world-worn heart.

Costly Sacrifice.

*"What hast thou done?" in agony he cried,
"One of my rarest, loveliest flowers is gone,
The most advanced of all, the garden's pride,
The choicest, richest one, on which the bright sun shone.*

HE hath done all things well," were the words of those who marked the hand of Christ upon the living; "He hath done all things well," are the words of him who with a more penetrating gaze, beholds the hand of Christ upon the dead. Christ is the Lord of life, let us not mistake His hand; it moves the little one that dies in Him from life to higher life, transplants but cuts not down. It argues a lack of spiritual apprehension, or a petulance or ignorance of heart, ever to say to Jesus in haste, "What hast thou done?" Thus we must never ask to remonstrate, though we may ask to be taught, if ours be the spirit which will be content should the answer come, "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." To trust, where we are not to know, oftentimes argues a higher faith, than to believe what we are taught. But thou sayest, "The sacrifice is so great"—perhaps it was thy all—perhaps thy fairest—perhaps, looking at it through grief's magnifying glass, thou thinkest now it was thy best. And be it so; wouldst thou offer thy Lord less than the best which thou hast? Wouldst thou, a Christian, give from thy fold less than the Jew, who yielded the choicest of his flock? Wouldst thou, a parent, ever proud to shew the fairest of thy children to the eyes of men, refuse to let thy child be seen by those whose sight is keener far than man's? If nature say, "The sacrifice is great;" does not grace answer from an inner depth, "And would'st thou have it less?"

Wide-spread Grief.

*"See how the earth is reddened all around;
O'er what a space this tree's dark shade is thrown!
Alas! that it should occupy the ground,
Where yesterday the fairest of my flowers was grown.*

SHAD memories throw long shadows. Bright memories are surrounded with halos of light, but dark shadows reach farther than bright halos in the heart. If thou complainest that the shadow falleth far over thy heart, then remember that the shadow is proportioned to the substance,—the shadow is so great, because thy love was so great; wouldst thou have had it less?

Thou sayest "Oh how I mourn:" say also "Oh how I loved." The Lord would not have had thee love thy lost one less, only He would have had thee love Him more; so long as He sitteth upon the throne, our loved ones may tarry on the steps. The loss of our child, interwoven as that little one was with thoughts and plans, and places, and persons, and things, must needs redden the earth for a long way round its accustomed place in our hearts. What marvel! Did God mean to do only some little thing when He took our child?

And now, sorrowing one, may this thy large wound turn to thy large blessing. Know assuredly that thy Lord knoweth how wide thy sorrow reacheth, know also that the blessing is meant to be as wide; one blessing hath been removed, that many blessings may be spared; one sorrow hath been sent, that sorrows innumerable may be withheld; He hath thrown a wide circle of shadow within thy heart, that thou mayest have safety in a wide circle of joy.

Sorrow's Gifts.

*"Hold!" said his friend, "there's sin in this complaint,
This tree is destined to preserve thy life;
Remember yesterday—that dreadful saint
Renewed, would prove more fatal than the murderer's
knife.*

HERE can be little doubt that in our spiritual life we are great debtors to heavy trials; we may even go so far as to say that these are made the means of the preservation of our spiritual existence. Just as certain medicines reduce fever, or stimulate the flagging powers of life, or dispel the humours which would eventually poison the whole system, so certain trials are made to act upon our souls, and neutralize the evils which threaten their spiritual existence, or their health. Had it not been that such a sum of money was lost, or such a fondly cherished expectation was disappointed, or such a beloved one was removed, we might have been of the earth, earthy, laden with the thick clay. God deals with His people, not by a series of miracles, but by a chain of providences; no doubt there are miraculous interpositions, but there are also providential dispensations. The Spirit of God hath oftentimes used a sad memory to shade a soul from the sun-stroke of some present joy.

Canst thou tell, sad afflicted one, all the blessing,—the much needed blessing,—which thy sad memory will bring to thee?

If thou *wilt* be blest, thou shalt be blest.

"May thy child be a blessing to thee," said some one, when it was born; "thy child shall be a blessing," saith ONE, "now that it is dead."

The Living Dead.

*"'Tis true, one beauteous flower hath been removed,
But see what I have planted where it grew :
This tree is close to all that thou hast loved,
And here thou mayest stay, and all their beauties view."*

LIVING children are to be seen at times looping their chains of flowers, and playing around the grave of a departed brother or sister. There is a sentiment which would say, "Separate the living and the dead;" there is a sentiment far deeper yet, which says, "Let the dead and living still be one." Rail not off the dead, so that the living cannot come nigh—"this tree is close to all that thou hast loved." Mourning one! let the memory of thy child have its place in thy family. Remove it not to the distant churchyard where the body lies, nor to the more distant sphere where the spirit is in joy; but keep the memory amid thy children, and let not their glee grate upon thine ears, when thou art thinking with a chastened spirit, and they are laughing with a merry heart. •

The dead one is thy child, and the living ones are thy children too; in a sense they must be asunder, in a sense also they may be together.

And it is thus, by keeping thy dead among thy living, that thy sorrow shall be sanctified to thee; for as thou lookest upon the living, and thy heart boundeth too fast, thou wilt look also upon the dead, and that heart will calm down to an even beat.

An even beat best becomes the heart of a Christian man; a memory of sorrow will oftentimes regulate the pulses which would flutter too fast amid the feverishness of joy.

Transplanted flowers.

*"But is that beauteous flower now cast away
Neglected, to be trampled under foot,
Remembered as a thing of yesterday,
But now a broken stem, or crushed and sapless root?"*

IN the bitterness of our grief, strange and unholy thoughts sometimes take possession of our minds. We say, "Why was my child ever born, if it was thus to die so soon?" We think of the light of the eye now dimmed, and the softness of the cheek now hard, and of the full rosy lips now colourless and drawn, and we say, "Why should this be so? Did God exquisitely make His handiwork only thus fearfully to unmake it, when but a very little while had passed?" In the petulance of grief we think that all God's dealings have been hard with us, and with our child; He has spoiled alike its beauty and our joy. But we speak in our ignorance; we do not look far enough; the thought of our heart is of "a broken stem," "a dry and sapless root;" but the truth is far better than our thoughts; our plant is still throwing out its perfumes. It is transplanted, not torn up by the roots; our poor hearts have been moved and cut with the spade; yea, the little roots seem almost to have carried away some of our flesh and blood around them, but the sufferings have been ours; we may have torn hearts, but our little one has not torn roots. Oh no! it would then be for a long time a sickly plant, sick and sorrowful in the land, where sickness and sorrow can never come. Despite the appearances of death, believe in the integrity of life; not a fibre of thy child's root has been wounded, not a petal of its flower been broken; it has been carefully transplanted, not ruthlessly cut down.

Heavenly Relationship.

"Nay!" said the rich man's friend, "thy flower hath found

A home with One who well its value knows;

'Tis planted now in rich and royal ground,

And still to every breeze its precious perfume throws.

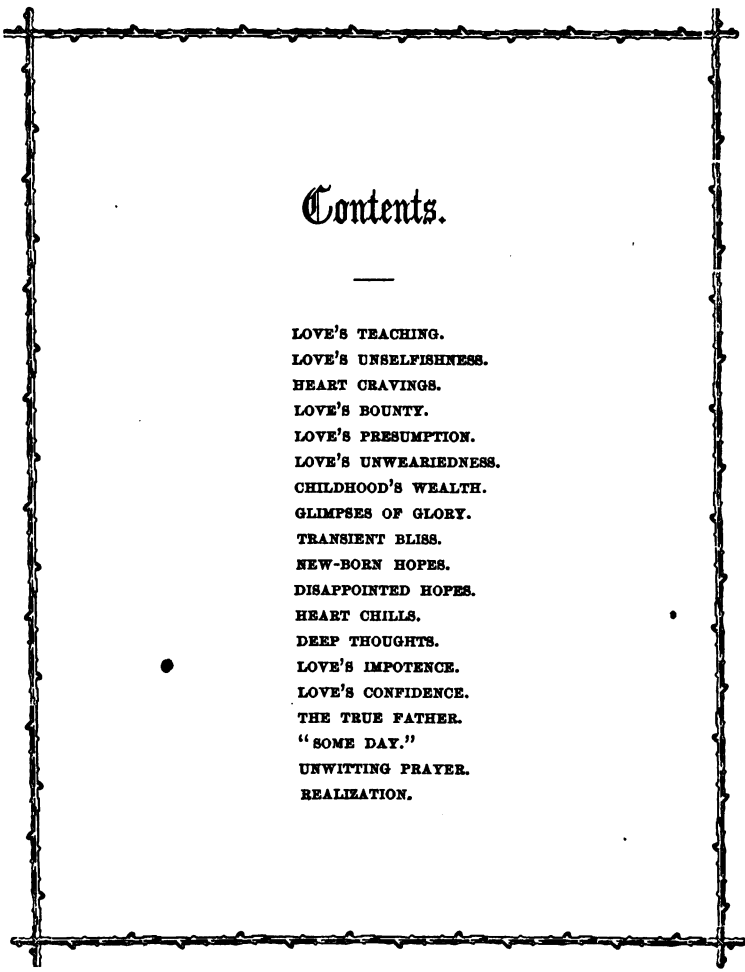
REMEMBER, poor mourner, that the child that hath left thy home hath found another home. Thy little one is not homeless; doth not that thought in itself pour oil and balm upon thy heart? Think no more of the isolation and loneliness of the body's grave, but think of the companionship and joyousness of the spirit's home. Life, love, joy, warmth, all cluster themselves about the name of home,—let them cluster in thy thoughts around thy child who is at home. Oh what loving care and thought were spent upon thy little one, and O, bitter grief! thou canst spend them now no more; the departed one is out of the reach of thy ministry; that thou canst no longer do anything for it is part of thy bitter woe. But think! "thy flower hath found a home with One who well its value knows." A voice softer than thine whispers to it, hands more gentle than thine minister to it, eyes more loving than thine look upon it; if thou lovest as a parent should love, be content to be outdone; thou art conquered in love's strife only by beings of another world, and thy child reapeth the victory of thy defeat; thou wouldst have done much for it had it lived, they do more now that it is dead; thou wouldst have set great price upon it had it tarried with thee here, a price far greater still is set upon it by Him that has taken it to Himself.

Time's Teaching.

*"The King Himself passed by at break of day,
And took the flower with Him, and sent for thee
This leafy screen, and thou, in time, wilt say
That thou hast nought more precious than this 'SHADY
TREE.'"*

“IN time,” perhaps, not at once; for sorrow's lessons are often very hard and take long to learn. He who was patient with all men, and ever especially patient with those whom He would teach, will be patient, poor mourner, with thee. He knoweth how thy poor heart hath been torn, He knoweth the amazement of grief, and He Himself it was who said, “What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” “No chastening,” saith His Apostle, “is for the present joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterward . . .”—and there is an “afterward,” poor sorrowing one, for thee, if in this thy woe thou seest that thy Saviour is dealing with thee. If thy sorrow be sanctified, a day will come in which thou wilt say, “This shady tree bears fruit: I would not be without a hallowed memory in my heart; I would not be without a dead child.” And whilst thou art learning this lesson, thy teacher will be patient with thee; and even though thou seemest, in the fluctuations of sorrow, to unlearn it at times, He will still wait for thee, expecting something of thee in time. Oh! disappoint Him not; then the bleeding wounds of thy heart shall be covered over with the emblems of healthy life; thou shalt have joys close clinging to the memories of the dead; the time shall have come for thee to say, “that thou hast nought more precious than this shady tree.”





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Love's Teaching.

*A little child with golden locks
Danced on her father's knee ;
" Father," said she, " from all thy flocks
The fairest give to me."*

LOVE'S teachings are often so fine as to be imperceptible ; the influences which it exercises are too subtle to be defined ; it is their glory to produce results, and yet be beyond the reach of being traced. Looks, touches, tones, the expression of the face, the softness of the touch, the modulation of the voice,—these are some of Love's lessons—lessons which we have learned, ere we knew that we were being taught. It is thus that we teach little children ; we dandle them upon the knee ; we clasp them to the breast ; we sport with them in their play ; we sympathize with them in their sorrows ; and all the while we are teaching them to love. And when we have thus taught our little ones to love, they are but repeating their lesson to us, when they seek from our hands a supply for their wants ; they have learned something from us, ere they expect much of us. Would that we could read our great Father's looks and words, and little tenderesses day by day, so as to expect great things at His hands—for want of the instinct to interpret little evidences of love aright, we fail in seeking those greater tokens which we have perhaps only to ask for, and have. Never let us make our child our toy, and teach it to expect, when we mean only to disappoint. Amid Love's pleasures, let us not forget Love's obligations, nor refuse to be bound with the golden chains which we ourselves have forged. We have much to do for the little one we teach to love—happy are we if we thus did all for the one that has passed away.

Love's Unselfishness.

*The fairest lamb the father had
He singled from his fold :
Well pleased the father was, and glad
That lamb had ne'er been sold.*

WHATEVER may be the pleasure of receiving, that of giving is still greater; there is deep truth for this world, as well as for the next, in the words of Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This lesson God would teach us in the innermost circles of our own homes, designing that it should radiate thence into the outermost circle of all with whom we have to do. A truth may practically be turned into a lie, if it be straitened within too narrow bounds; if the love which teaches us to give to our children, pass not beyond our children, it becomes selfishness, not the less real, because it is not gross. We have felt what it was to be glad to have to give to our child—glad, not to have missed the opportunity of giving—glad to have sacrificed what we might have thought our own gain, seeing that thereby we had the greater gain of making our child happy, and so being most truly happy ourselves. We have drawn this, or that, out of the current of life's trade or use, because our child admired it, as it floated by. Reader! tarry not in this home development of love—it is not the end of love—it is but a means to a more glorious end. The incense of love's sacrifice is intended to float beyond the inner sanctuary of home. Thou art taught love's pleasure in giving, in the privacy of home, that thou mayest go forth, and give cheerfully in the world abroad. Be thou like unto the high priest of old, who came forth from the innermost sanctuary to bless the people.

Heart Cravings.

*The father's neck with tight clasped hands
The child embracing held :
" Father," said she, " of all thy lands
I want the fairest field."*

HERE are heart cravings even in little children, which are suggestive of solemn thoughts to those, who are not above learning from so humble a source. The child who gains its wish, and for a while enjoys its new-found pleasure, and then casts it away, used up, and worn out in but a very little while, is only the miniature of the man or woman. Neglected toys, cast aside even before they are broken in pieces, with some of their tinselled finery still hanging upon them, are but types of Life's after pleasures, which are possessed and yet leave the heart still craving, still longing for something else—the fairest lamb still left the child longing, and seeking to fill its heart's craving with the fairest field. As long as we are seeking our happiness on earth, and from earth, we are like the child, ever crying, " Give, give," and yet left unsatisfied after all. These heart cravings are witnesses of our immortality; and if memory recall them when we think of our little one that has gone, does not our heart rejoice as we think that it has passed from a land where even the fairest cannot satisfy, to that more blessed land where neither heart nor mouth hunger or thirst any more. Have we relics of the past? Stored treasures of it may be broken toys, or childish raiment; let us think how the first were cast aside—how the second must have been outgrown; let them cause us to smile as well as weep, for all such argue the imperfection of the provision that is of man; our child has now the provision which is of God.

Love's Bounty.

*He sought that field in all his ground
Where richest crops were grown ;
And when the favoured spot he found,
He told her, 'twas her own*

WE love to give our children the best we have. We chafe and bargain with the world, but we give to our children, without expecting them to pay ; the best we have is not too good for them. From this instinct of our nature—strong, even in such as know not God, our Saviour would raise high expectations from the Great Father—the One who alone knows the perfection of parental love. “ If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask Him ? ” Fathers and mothers should be large in expectation, and strong in faith ; they should learn from their own instincts ; Jesus would teach them out of that which is within themselves. The alphabet of love is known by intuition in every parent's heart ; the Great Teacher would shew us how to join its letters into words, and make it speak of love in its highest form—the love of the Father that is in heaven. Oh ! parent, let the generosity of thy love to thy child mind thee of the greater generosity of that higher love, which is in God to His children. Herein is love, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. He that spared not His Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things ?

Tobe's Presumption.

*The little maid mysteriously
Gazed in her father's face ;
" The richest flowers I want," said she,
" Which grow in this fine place."*

LOVE has a presumption peculiarly its own ; it is a presumption which acts, not only in the consciousness of another's love, but also in the consciousness of its own. To presume upon another's love may be baseness—to presume out of our own, is confidence. Such sweet presumptions of love we have often experienced from our little ones, it may be from one from whom, alas ! we can experience nothing more again on earth. Let us learn from our children, and as they are confident in asking oftentimes of us, so let us be confident in asking often-times and asking much from our Father that is above. And should any err through ignorance, theirs shall be no denial of sharp reproof, but a denial of love—it may be that Jesus will say, " Ye know not what ye ask," but it will be in a sweet and solemn voice to him that can say, " Lord, thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love thee." Hast thou asked much and asked often hitherto, oh ! be not afraid in the sweet confidence of love to ask again. A Father's love uses not the gifts of the past as arguments against gifts in the future ; because God hath given, believe that He will give again. The importunity of Abraham met with no rebuff. He may ask for great things, who knows how to behold his Father's face with the mysterious gaze of love.

Our eye reflects the image of those who look intently upon us ; God's eye reflects the image of those who look intently upon Him.

Love's Unweariedness.

*The father soon fulfilled his task,
He spared not even one ;
Whate'er the maiden chose to ask,
Ungrudgingly was done.*

TRUE love is never weary ! Its resources may be dried up ; its energies may be overtasked ; it may be impotent to act ; but it is unwearied still. True love wants not to rest from its labours ; its pleasure is in action, and not in attaining to a state in which it need act no more.

Fresh tasks wear out a feeble love, but they draw out the energies of love, deep and true. Such love is thorough even to the end ; it will do, or attempt to do, its last task as perfectly as the first.

The same breast that nourished the little one when it first drew the breath of life, pillows its aching head, now that it is departing out of life—it grieves, not that there has been too much, but that there is now no more to do.

Jesus, having loved his own, loved them unto the end.

What sweet balm does this pour into the heart, when we think of the one that has gone—memory bids us read the diary of love's deeds, and we rejoice as we go over its record, and think that we wrought, until we had no opportunity of working more. Love thinks, not only of what was done, but of *how* it was done also ; and these little touches of light gild with brightness the events in the long and, otherwise sad, perspective of the past.

Unwearied and ungrudging is the Great Father's love to us. He is as ready to supply our last need as our first ; the need of help in the present sorrow, as of the gift of any former joy.

Childhood's Wealth.

*Thus rich, the child in joyous play
Passed all the sunny hours,
Crowning the lambs with garlands gay,
Or sleeping on her flowers.*

THE most real enjoyment on earth is that which is possessed by children. The happiness of Adam in Eden was that of a child in the enjoyment of a father's gifts; he reasoned not upon their nature, he speculated not upon their origin, he feared not their loss, he was as a child with God; with such a Father, it was not childish to have child-like joy,—it was when man would elevate himself out of the child-like state that all of earth became associated with curse and care. Let us contemplate well the sunny hours of childhood; they will give us a glimpse of what Eden was, they will give us also a glimpse of what heaven shall be. Our Lord, man's greatest teacher, instructed by a child, by a child surely may we be taught; a playing child, albeit he knows it not, is a preacher of what has been, and a prophet of what is yet to be. Shall not we endeavour to return to the child-like condition in which our first father dwelt, and in which our own children have so much joy? Shall not we seek for some sunny hours in simple and trusting enjoyment of what has been given to us by our Father? Dark hours of night and storm will burst in upon us, for this is not heaven or paradise, but earth, but there are many sunny hours for the children of God.

Let the parent who provided for a departed little one many a transient sunny hour, rejoice in the thought that the Great Parent has now provided for that little one sunny hours which are eternal.

Glimpses of Glory.

*While sleeping on her rosy bed,
She saw, amid her dreams,
One place a crown upon her head
Woven of sunny beams.*

GLIMPSES of glory are at certain seasons vouchsafed from heaven. At times they are given in the midst of tribulation and gloom, and at times in the midst of earthly happiness and brightness, when they attract us, not merely because they are bright, but because they are brighter than even that which has been the brightest to us on earth.

St. Paul saw a light brighter than the sun to cast him down upon the earth; we see a light brighter than the sun to upraise us to heaven. The least revelation of the glory of the other life can eclipse the highest glories of this; do not the stars pale their twinkling lights even at the first dawning of the day. And assuredly it is the glory of heaven's brightness, that it can thus approve itself more radiant than the most glittering of this world's beams—does it not thus woo us for the higher world, and say, “there is something richer in store for thee than the richest here, more glorious than even the most glorious of all that is seen on earth.” Heaven's glory outshines, but does not extinguish all earthly lights. This, let us remember, when we think of children which have departed, and of children which are left. Those that have departed to the Lord have gone to higher light—those which remain, the Lord would win by higher light also. Tell thy children that religion is not only prohibitions of law, but that it is also gifts of grace; a crown of sunny beams is woven for the followers of Him who wore a crown of piercing thorns.

Transient Bliss.

*So long as she in slumber lay,
The diadem she wore ;
But when she woke, it passed away,
And could be seen no more.*

WHEN Peter, James, and John, saw the transfiguration upon the mount, they would evermore have tarried there; they would have made permanent that which, in the deep designs of God, was meant to last for but a little while; they would have lived in the enjoyment, rather than in the power of the vision which they had seen. Let us not mistake God's cordials for His food, nor think that when extraordinary brightness has passed away, we must of necessity walk in gloom. Let us beware of the opposite evil also; let us not underrate the transient visions of brightness, which are vouchsafed even to a child; let us not think that a little one is too insignificant to receive a revelation from on high—remember each dew-drop is but small, yet it reflects a perfect sun. The Lord spake to the child Samuel, though hard by was Eli, the aged priest. Does He thus speak to any child of ours? Shall we not teach it to say, " 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth'—draw aside our child if it be Thy will, for a season from the activities of life's waking hours, and when all of earth is shut out, reveal the glorious things which belong unto Thyself." That which is transient may yet be real, we must make much even of one bright thought of heaven which fleets through the mind of our child.

One fleeting thought may stamp the destiny for life—leading, if it be of the evil world, to the abasement of eternal woe; leading, if it be of the world of light, to the crown of light above.

New-born Hopes.

*No longer did the maiden mind
Roses or lilies white;
She left the lambs and flowers to find
The diadem of light.*

NEW-BORN hopes are capable of giving mighty impulses to the soul. New ideas, new desires, new pursuits, all follow in their train; it might almost be said, "They make all things new." Is it not worth our while to ask ourselves, what we have done in the power of new-born hope? what have we left? what have we pursued? what have we attempted to grasp? Alas! if at one time new-born hopes of glory make us do much, and forego much, do they not die out within us, so that we mind earthly things again, and seek not those things which are above! The power of our hope's freshness is gone, because the freshness is gone itself. And if we feel this, shall we not ask for a fresh glimpse of glory; so that earthly things may lessen in our esteem, and we may follow after that which is not of the earth again?

And shall we not take heed how we slay such a new-born hope as this, whenever we find that it has gleamed in upon our children's hearts—how we teach them, that the light from heaven which has beamed in upon their souls, claims only to be admired, and not to be pursued—how we teach them that it is folly to give up anything of earth, and with living earnestness to seek anything of heaven. It may be, that our children have but small ways of shewing their earnestness; but let us remember that what is small to us, is great to them—what, if any of our little ones miss heaven's crown of light, because we constrained them to be satisfied with earth's land and flowers!

Disappointed Hopes.

*And up and down she chased each beam
Which glittered on the ground ;
But all in vain ; it did not seem
The crown could e'er be found.*

WE would fain realize at once the full fruition of that, of which we can have but glimpses while on the earth. 'To see' and 'to have,' are so connected in a child's mind, as to form almost but one idea ; thus also it often is with those who, in the spiritual life, are but children, and have earnestness but not wisdom in divine things—they would have on earth, what cannot be had, except in heaven. Much there is, no doubt, of brightness upon the earth—much of brightness especially in spiritual relationships and things—much which we, in our short-sightedness, may think, will embody, and answer to the bright vision which has come into our minds, but all in vain is our effort to realize heaven while on earth ; we have been taught, by disappointment after disappointment, that what we seek is not here—that much is bright, but nothing bright enough. Happy is that child who cannot, with all its efforts, reach the goal of its own desires ; let us take heed how we urge such an one to be content ; we may be binding down the heart to that which glitters on the ground. Permitted disappointments are amongst the most effective of God's leadings ; they are meant to lead the heart to Him who disappointeth not. Would we have had our little one ever wearying itself with the pursuit of phantom-pleasures—with reflections of light, instead of light itself ?

God often proves to us, that we cannot find on earth, what He means to give in heaven.

Heart Chills.

*At length, the heavy shadows fell,
The dew struck damp and cold :
She heard the flocks, with tinkling bell
Returning to their fold.*

NEXT after "disappointed hopes" come "heart chills." Heart chills strike not at once, but when hope after hope is blasted, and the excitement of pursuit has subsided, and no result has been attained, then long deep shadows are thrown athwart our souls; and cold chills lay damp and clammy hands upon our hearts; for, "Hope deferred, maketh the heart sick." Heart chills are known, alas! only too well to us, but are they known to children? To many thoughtful children, unquestionably they are; some advance but a very little way in life, ere they perceive that it cannot give them all that their hearts crave; God awakens a desire, which cannot be satisfied by earth. But let us remember that heart chills are not fatal; they are not intended to destroy or even to injure life; they are meant to be deep confirmations of the vanity of earthly hopes. There is a solemnity and mystery about these "heart chills," akin to that which accompanies the ending of a summer's day—the turmoil of vexation has passed, ere the heart chills comes on; when effort has expended itself in vain, they set in. Let us not laugh at the heart chills of a child—a little chill strikes heavily upon a little heart.

Heart chills are the reaction of excitement; the exhaustion of effort in which there has been no success. Some, with thoughts no higher than the flocks and herds, find on earth all that they desire; a damp cold chill is all that earth can give to those who would realize on its bosom the vision of heavenly light.

Deep Thoughts.

*With thoughtful steps she homeward went,
And on her father's knee
Once more she sat, her large eyes bent
On him mysteriously.*

HERE are depths in the ocean, where, far beneath the unrest of tossing waves and powerful currents, all is calm and still. There, delicate and unworn shells have been found,—there, where none would have sought for them,—there, where no ordinary influences could have reached them. And there are depths in the heart far below all the strong currents of life's cares, and the sparkling foam of life's joys, and these depths exist in even a young child's mind. Just as the deep-sea line brings up from amazing depths these unworn shells, so from time to time something passes into inner depths of children's hearts, and brings from them thoughts which we never knew were dwelling there—unworn thoughts—thoughts around which a mystery seems to hang. Have we not sometimes been startled by the strange observations of our child—our child—sitting familiarly upon our knee, but looking at us mysteriously, and questioning us most strangely. There have oftentimes been thoughtful steps before thoughtful looks; the questions our children have put to us, have been the results of processes of thought, perhaps of experiences in their little hearts. Childish disappointments have set up trains of thought which pass even into another world.

Let not the parent who has lost a child grieve at the remembrance of failure in soothing some disappointment of the one that has gone; our success would have left unlearned the lesson which God's spirit would have taught.

Love's Impotence.

*"Father," said she, "I want a crown
Woven of sunny beams;"*

*"Why, such a thing was never known,"
Said he, "except in dreams."*

WHOSOEVER has a deep knowledge of love's might, will be sure to have a deep knowledge of love's impotence also; he has but shallow experience of love's strength, who thinks it can do everything. It is the man who strains love's efforts to the uttermost, that knows that there is a bound beyond which they cannot go—a goal which they cannot reach. I think much of that love, which has found out how much love can do; I think yet more of that love, which has found out how much love cannot do.

Happy is that child who has desires which no earthly parent can satisfy—happy is that parent who has learned that he cannot supply every one of his child's needs. Does not this felt impotence of human love speak to us, and say, "Seek not to monopolize thy child's heart, for love as thou wilt, thou can'st not do everything for it; keep not back its heart from Him whose love can do all things for it." Has our little one been taken from us, let us bethink us what at most our love could have done for it; how it could not have given even the smallest of heavenly things or have fulfilled the most childish desire for that which belongs to another life. Would we have heard our child ever saying "I want," and ourselves answering, "I cannot give!" 'Twere miserable selfishness in us to wish our child fed on this world's husks, because we could present them with our own hands, rather than with bread from the hands of the Father that is in heaven.

Love's Confidence.

*"But father, I've been often taught
My father all can give;
That if to him my wish be brought,
That wish I shall receive."*

IT is no small part of our pleasure that our children come to us for everything; verily their loving confidence rebukes our backwardness in seeking *all* things from our Father that is in heaven. The father and the mother are almost omnipotent in a young child's eyes; it is only as their eyes open, that they perceive their parent's weakness; our true Father above, is omnipotent indeed, it is only as our eyes open that we perceive His strength. "All!"—Love, which aims at what is great, will also condescend to what is small—the man that is all day long engaged in weighty business to make a fortune for his child, will make it a weighty business not to forget to bring home some trifle for which that little one expressed a wish. Let us encourage this confidence in children; let us lead them to bring us all their wants, and tell us all their wishes; we do not compromise our dignity by stooping even to be interested in a straw, if it interest our child. And should our little one depart; then, how sweet the thought, that in all its afflictions we were afflicted, and in all its pleasures we were glad; its joys were doubled and its sorrows halved by our sympathizing love. Should our little one remain with us, then can we use its confidence in us, as a type to teach ourselves and it, of the confidence to be reposed in the Father that is above.

Dear reader, let us not only adore and worship God, but let us confide in Him. The highest of all adoration is that of Love, and true love and confidence cannot be severed.

The True Father.

*The father stroked her head and smiled,
And, pointing up on high,
Said, "There that Father dwells, my child,
In yonder glorious sky."*

THE true Father dwells on high. "Our Father which art in heaven," were the words which Jesus taught His disciples. "Every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights," says the Apostle. Happy is the parent who has well taught this lesson to the little one that has departed; wise that parent who teaches it to such as are left behind. Never let us shrink, with a secret jealousy, from teaching our children that God is the truest Father, and heaven the truest home. The father on earth must never attempt to supplant the Father in heaven, even as the Father in heaven will never depreciate the one on earth. Earthly parentage, however true, is but a type of that which is higher still. And when a little one is taken from us, shall we not point our sorrowing hearts on high, and say—My child is not fatherless, but has found alike its truest Father, and its truest home.

"Who took the baby at the other side?" asked a little child, when told that its little brother or sister had crossed the stream that separates time from eternity, the world around from the world invisible—Who, but The true Father?

Is not our unwillingness to let our child go to God often, in point of fact, a saying that we will not trust it to His arms—that we do not feel that He will be indeed a Father to it?

Oh bright thought for a downcast heart—my child is now with One who can give it everything it desires.

"Some Day."

*"Ask Him; perhaps some day He'll twine
A crown around thy brow!
Which brighter, brighter far shall shine,
Then that thou would'st have now."*

"SOME day," weret he words wherewith a little child continually comforted itself in all its little disappointments. "Some day," seemed to open the door of hope, and though the words were vague, they cheered the heart, and shut out the chill of cold despair. And these words belong not only to our children, but to ourselves: our Father says "Some day" to us—even in the thought of reunion with our dead, who have died in the Lord, are we not cheered by the remembrance that it will be "Some day," albeit, that "Some day" may be yet afar off. "Some day," says our Father, "ye shall rest;" and in the power of that coming day, let us toil—"Some day" ye shall weep no more; and in the power of that coming day, let us now not weep over much. It may be that we have days of toil and nights of sorrow to live through and to bear, but we must bear in hope; "Some day" will more than pay for all.

And to that "Some day" let us also direct the thoughts of our children; let us teach them a religion full of hope; let us tell them not only of the journey, but of the journey's end; not only of the waitings, and the strugglings, and the seekings, which must be in time; but of the finding, the fruition, and the rest, when time shall be no more. Reader! if any child still be left to thee, let thy teaching plainly set a hope before its eyes; thou canst not settle when that hope shall be realized, but thou canst do thy part that it should exist.

Unwitting Prayer.

*Kneeling beside her little bed,
The maiden prayed that night,
That God would twine around her head
A diadem of light.*

“**Y**E wot not what ye ask,” were the words of our Lord to those who would have high places in His kingdom; sitting on the right hand, and the left; and “ye wot not what ye ask,” might be the answer to some of the great petitions which are made by us. The words of many prayers, are deeper than is known, by those by whom they are used. May it not have been thus with some of the prayers which we have offered up on our children’s behalf—on behalf of the little one now removed! Perhaps in taking it away, God has answered our prayer exceeding abundantly; with a length, and depth and breadth far beyond what ever entered into our thoughts. Perhaps we often prayed that He would make it His own; and He has done so, only sooner, and more thoroughly than we conceived.

Oh, let us not want to appoint the times and seasons of the answers to our prayers; these the Father keeps in His own hand; we think, perhaps, an answer comes *too* soon; had it not come thus soon, it may never have come at all.

Happy is that parent who can call to mind half-lisp’d bed-side prayers, which have now received their answer in Paradise: who can think, “I directed my child where to look for the bright gift, which it has now received.” Oh what blessedness will it be hereafter, for our light-crowned child to say—Thou, my father, thou, my mother, didst teach me where to seek, and lo! I have found the diadem of light.

Realization.

*And quick the answer came ; her eyes
Slept their last sleep ; she died
That night—and found in Paradise
What this cold world denied.*

“REALIZATION!” oh, what a word for those who live in the midst of insincerity, unreality, disappointment, and all that causes heart chills, and heart sinkings in this world of great expectations and poor results. There are burning thoughts, to which this cold world can supply no fuel—deep soul cravings, for which this wilderness life can supply no good—hungerings and thirstings, for which there are here below neither bread to eat, nor water to drink. “Realization” is the word that mocks the man of gaiety who has enjoyed all pleasures; the man of war who has won many battles; the man of science who has made many discoveries, and the man of gain who has amassed much wealth. If earth cannot realize the lower visions of such men, how can it realize the higher visions of those who have had flashed upon them the light of heaven, and created within them a longing for that bright glory which is of another land? Grieve not, because thy child will unclothe its eyes no more on earth—that thou canst watch no more its waking, and its returning consciousness greeting thee with a smile—it hath unclosed its eyes in Paradise, to find a reality, what here could at best have been but a dream—to wear the crown for which on earth, it could have done no more than strive.

THE END.

The Lost Sunbeam.

I

SOFT music made the waves one summer morn,
And tho' 'twas soft, it sounded merrily ;
And voice of harp, and flute, and winding horn,
Came o'er the distance vast most dreamily.

II.

"Wherefore," I asked, "is this soft music played ?
For none are dancing on the long-drawn strand ;
Is it for children of this earth 'tis made,
Or wash these waves some brighter, distant land ?"

III.

Across the boundless sea, I looked in vain ;
Mine eye discerned no hills, no white-cliffed shore :
Yet as I looked, more cheerful grew the strain,
And louder far than it had been before.

The Lost Sunbeam.

IV.

While thus perplexed, I saw a sunbeam bright
Dancing from wave to wave, in sportive glee ;
Where'er it passed, a tiny print of light
It left upon the ever-changing sea.

V.

From wave to wave it leaped, 'till every one
It touched was crowned with gems of many a hue :
Straight coming from the glorious full-orbed sun
'Twas wondrous what that little beam could do.

VI.

I looked not long, ere all grew hushed and still ;
The music faded rapidly away :
Thick clouds came rolling o'er each neighbouring hill,
The tempest marr'd that glorious summer day.

VII.

'Twas but a little while, and lo ! a form,
All swathed in night, strode o'er that placid sea ;
I knew the fearful Spirit of the storm ;
His knotted scourge unveiled his mystery.

The Lost Sunbeam.

VIII.

With rude and savage hand the crown he dashed
From every riplet's brow ; and with a cry
Of rage he stamped them down, then fiercely lashed
Them into boiling surging agony.

IX.

All now was dark ; and sorrow filled mine heart ;
Where was the sunbeam ? where its merry light ?
It seemed so sad from brightness thus to part ;
And take instead the gloom of stormy night.

X.

"So fair wert thou, small beam," I cried aloud,
"That could I only tell where thou hast gone ;
I'd seek thee through the mist, and gloom and cloud,
For never beam on earth so brightly shone."

XI.

"Seek then," a voice in whispering accents said,
"The top of yonder mountain, high and steep ;
For there thou'lt find the little beam which strayed
Awhile upon th' inconstant storm-vexed deep."

The Lost Sunbeam.

XII.

With staff in hand, with weary feet I trod
For many a day and night that mountain side;
Oft cut with stones which lay upon the road,
Oft striving from myself my pain to hide.

XIII.

At length the top I gained, and there I found
A tiny lake in which the sunbeam played:
And trees of rarest worth all stood around,
And with their waving boughs soft music made.

XIV.

Then spake the voice,—“The everlasting hills
Full many a lake and beam like this possess:
Lakes which are fed by ever-flowing rills;
Beams streaming from the Sun of Righteousness.

XV.

“Look down! dark mists and clouds thou seest below;
And on the sea, where played this glorious beam,
Mark how the lightnings flash, and fiercely throw
Their angry fires—their forked and livid gleam.

The Lost Sunbeam.

XVI.

“ Was that a place for this bright beam to stay ?
Could it have lived in that fierce swell and foam ?
Look down ! look round ! thy heart will wisely say,
That here indeed thou’st found THE SUNBEAM’S HOME.”



The Shady Tree.

I.

A RICH man own'd a garden full of flowers,
Whose varied colours dazzled every eye;
Thick set was it with rarest plants, and bowers
Of creeping jessamine, whose tendrils arch'd on high.

II.

No greater joy had he, than, up and down,
Amid these flow'rs to walk each summer's day;
Their greatest charm that they were all his own;
That none were known around, so fair, so bright as they.

III.

This rich man was not churlish of his gold,
He never held his hand from God's own poor;
No bitter tale of sorrow e'er was told,
But that he tried to find the sufferer a cure.

The Shady Tree.

IV.

Nor did he hide his flowers, and selfishly
Forbid all eyes to see their many a hue ;
But all were free to look at them, and see
How, day by day, they throve, and fairer, lovelier, grew.

V.

A special charm around these flowers was cast,
Because they had few peers in loveliness ;
Yet he who own'd them, never proudly pass'd
The hedge-side blossoms, in their humbler, lowlier, dress.

VI.

Nor scorn'd he any poor man's garden plot,
The simple flowers, the all that he could raise ;
The blushing rose, the blue forget-me-not,
Were sure to win from him a word of kindly praise.

VII.

Thus happy spent this rich man many a day,
His heart, perhaps, too full of deep content ;
When in a strange and unexpected way,
While walking 'mid his flowers, a trial deep was sent.

The Shady Tree.

VIII.

The sun waxed hot, and fiercer still it grew,
Fiercer each day ; for on the thirsty ground,
Not e'en one friendly cloud its shadow threw,
Nor sign of rain, nor breeze, could be discerned around.

IX.

Then to his jess'mine bowers the rich man hied,
Quite sure to find a shelter from the sun ;
But lo ! each once thick bower in vain he tried,—
The fierce, the fearful heat had withered every one.

X.

Thus stood he in his garden sore perplexed,
Mourning the havoc which the heat had made :
When in a garden far away, half vexed
He saw an old man sitting 'neath a cypress shade.

XI.

"I'd give a thousand golden crowns," said he,
"That I had such a grateful shelter near ;
A thousand crowns for e'en one single tree,
For I must faint if I stay long unsheltered here."

The Shady Tree.

xii.

Half fainting thus was he, when lo! there came,
Walking amid the flowers, a well known friend;
Dearest of all dear friends was he, the same
Who oft in infancy used o'er his cradle bend.

xiii.

Who carefully his earlier years had taught,
Who richly had his after years endowed:
Who from a distant sunny land had brought
For him the flowers of which his heart was now so proud.

xiv.

Gently, the object of His early care
He chid, for dallying 'mid the flowers so long;
"How oft," said he, "I've warned thee to beware,
Lest e'en for thy stout frame, the sun should prove too
strong."

xv.

"Had'st thou much longer in the sun delay'd,
Thou might'st not only strength, but life have lost:
The want, in such fierce heat, of friendly shade
Hath proved to many a man, of bitter, lasting cost."

The Shady Tree.

XVI.

And then aside his tottering feet He led,
Guiding his feet, for he had lost his sight :
With tenderest hand He bathed his aching head,
And on His bosom pillowed it the live-long night.

XVII.

When morning came, once more the rich man bent
His steps to where the lovely flow'rets grew ;
To tarry there, a shorter while content,
But ah ! how little of his foolish heart he knew.

XVIII.

Amid his flowers he would have stayed again,
'Till death had finished what he had begun ;
Parching the blood in ev'ry half-filled vein,
Shooting a dart in ev'ry beam of that bright sun.

XIX.

But ere he left his couch, his flowers to see,
His friend had early to his garden been,
And planted there a dark but lovely tree,
Whose twining branches formed a thick and leafy screen.

The Shady Tree.

xx.

“What hast thou done?” in agony he cried,
“One of my rarest, loveliest flowers is gone,
The most advanced of all, the garden’s pride,
The choicest, richest one, on which the bright sun shone.

xxi.

“See how the earth is reddened all around;
O’er what a space this tree’s dark shade is thrown!
Alas! that it should occupy the ground,
Where yesterday the fairest of my flowers was grown.

xxii.

“Hold!” said his friend, “there’s sin in this complaint,
This tree is destined to preserve thy life;
Remember yesterday—that dreadful faint
Renewed, would prove more fatal than the murderer’s
knife.

xxiii.

“’Tis true, one beauteous flower hath been removed,
But see what I have planted where it grew:
This tree is close to all that thou hast loved,
And here thou mayest stay, and all their beauties view.”

The Shady Tree.

XXIV.

"But is that beauteous flower now cast away
Neglected, to be trampled under foot,
Remembered as a thing of yesterday,
But now a broken stem, or crushed and sapless root?"

XXV.

"Nay!" said the rich man's friend, "thy flower hath found
A home with One who well its value knows;
'Tis planted now in rich and royal ground,
And still to every breeze its precious perfume throws.

XXVI.

"The King Himself passed by at break of day,
And took the flower with Him, and sent for thee
This leafy screen; and thou, in time, wilt say
That thou hast nought more precious than this 'SHADY
TREE.'"



The Golden Sunbeams.

I.

A LITTLE child with golden locks
Danced on her father's knee ;
"Father," said she, "from all thy flocks
The fairest give to me."

II.

The fairest lamb the father had
He singled from his fold :
Well pleased the father was, and glad
That lamb had ne'er been sold.

III.

The father's neck with tight clasped hands
The child embracing held :
"Father," said she, "of all thy lands
I want the fairest field."

The Golden Sunbeams.

IV.

He sought that field in all his ground
Where richest crops were grown ;
And when the favoured spot he found,
He told her 'twas her own.

V.

The little maid mysteriously
Gazed in her father's face ;
"The richest flowers I want," said she,
"Which grow in this fine place."

VI.

The father soon fulfilled his task,
He spared not even one ;
Whate'er the maiden chose to ask,
Ungrudgingly was done.

VII.

Thus rich, the child in joyous play
Passed all the sunny hours,
Crowning the lambs with garlands gay,
Or sleeping on her flowers.

The Woven Sunbeams.

VIII.

While sleeping on her rosy bed,
She saw, amid her dreams,
One place a crown upon her head
Woven of sunny beams.

IX.

So long as she in slumber lay,
The diadem she wore ;
But when she woke, it passed away,
And could be seen no more.

X.

No longer did the maiden mind
Roses or lilies white ;
She left the lambs and flowers to find
The diadem of light.

XI.

And up and down she chased each beam
Which glittered on the ground ;
But all in vain ; it did not seem
The crown could e'er be found.

The Woven Sunbeams.

xii.

At length the heavy shadows fell,
The dew struck damp and cold :
She heard the flocks, with tinkling bell
Returning to their fold.

xiii.

With thoughtful steps she homeward went,
And on her father's knee
Once more she sat, her large eyes bent
On him mysteriously.

xiv.

"Father," said she, "I want a crown
Woven of sunny beams ;"
"Why, such a thing was never known,"
Said he, "except in dreams."

xv.

"But father, I've been often taught
My father all can give ;
That if to him my wish be brought,
That wish I shall receive."

The Woven Sunbeams.

XVI.

The father stroked her head and smiled,
And pointing up on high,
Said, "There that Father dwells, my child,
In yonder glorious sky."

XVII.

"Ask Him: perhaps some day He'll twine
A crown around thy brow!
Which brighter, brighter, far shall shine,
Than that thou would'st have now."

XVIII.

Kneeling beside her little bed,
The maiden prayed that night,
That God would twine around her head,
A diadem of light.

XIX.

And quick the answer came; her eyes
Slept their last sleep; she died
That night—and found in Paradise
What this cold world denied.

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